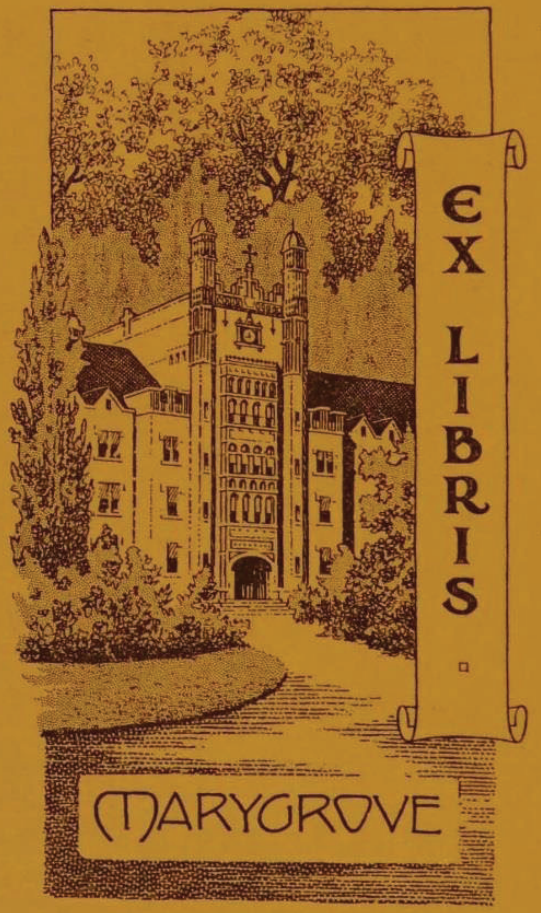
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THE THIRD SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

By

FRAY FRANCISCO DE OSUNA

Translated from the Spanish by a BENEDICTINE OF STANBROOK

With an Introduction by

FATHER CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

AND NOTES SHOWING THE INFLUENCE
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INTRODUCTION

WE are told in the Gospel that the first law of life is to 'love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy strength and with all thy mind.'[1] The end of contemplative prayer—or prayer of recollection—is nought else than the fulfilment of this law.

When this fact is realized it is surprising how little attention is given to the acquiring of the habit of contemplative prayer amongst those who aspire to something more than a mere servile obedience to the laws of God and of the Church.

Commonly contemplative prayer is regarded as the prayer of the select few; a domain into which it would be presumptuous for the ordinary Christian to seek admittance. Yet as a matter of fact most people have an aptitude for contemplative prayer, but fail to develop it either from moral laziness or perverseness or because of lack of encouragement or direction on the part of those to whom they look for guidance.

Moreover the orthodox Catholic world has, perhaps, hardly yet recovered from the shock of the Quietist heresy and the reaction which followed it; and the pseudo-mysticism of a more recent period has not been without its deterrent effect on the part of the less discerning of spiritual directors.

Yet the very life of Catholicism may be said to depend for its spiritual energy upon its contemplatives and upon the activity of the contemplative spirit in the normal life of the Church. In the diffusion of the practice of contemplative prayer lies the most powerful antidote to that religious externalism and formalism which is the bane of the spiritual life.

The growth and increase of contemplative religious communities in recent years has been rightly held as a sign of renewed spiritual strength in the Church. But contemplative prayer is not the exclusive possession of such communities. It belongs by right to the whole body of the Church, to the laity as well as the clergy and the religious orders; and it is as it permeates all ranks and

[1] Luke x, 27; Matthew xxii, 37; Mark xii, 30.

states in the general body of the faithful, that the spirituality of the Catholic body is developed and strengthened. And in these days of feverish external activities the neglect of contemplative prayer as an element in the normal life of the Catholic body is peculiarly dangerous to the well-being of Catholicism as a spiritual force in the world. There is the danger lest even our multiple religious external activities—not to speak of the modern fever of purely secular life—will make us forget ' the one thing necessary ' —the intimate communion of man with God which is the direct object of contemplative prayer.

Intimately allied with contemplative prayer is ' the mystical life ' : in fact the entrance into the mystical life is through contemplative prayer. And here, perhaps, lies one of the chief deterrents which hold back the ordinary sane-minded religious man from even considering contemplative prayer as within the purview of practical life. Few men are really tolerant of ' the mystic ' ; and of the comparatively few who do tolerate him, the greater number regard him with curiosity rather than with appreciation. Yet in fact every man is a mystic in so far as he looks beyond the appearances of things and seeks the hidden realities of life. And certain it is that all true religion is enveloped in mysticism and draws its very breath of life from that mystical world in which God and man meet in intimate communion of spirit.

Not all men, the masters insist, are capable of the higher flights to which the rarer sorts attain ; and in their sane wisdom these masters warn us not to be ambitious to penetrate into the inner secrets beyond what we are capable of penetrating by God's special grace. If this warning were better known there would perhaps be less suspicion of the sanity of the mystical life, and less doubt on the part of many as to the call to the practice of contemplative prayer. For whilst contemplative prayer is the right of the many, only comparatively few are called to be ' mystics ' in the more exclusive sense in which the word is commonly used : just as most men can be trained to a fine appreciation of music, whilst few become masters in the art, and fewer still are musicians in the highest sense.

Now just as the inability to appreciate good music denotes a positive defect in a man's natural self, so does the lack of aptitude for contemplative prayer point to a positive defect in a man's religious nature. But, as we have said, the normal man has the aptitude, only in most men it remains undeveloped and is allowed to lie idle to their great spiritual loss.

As we have said, the end of contemplative prayer is nothing

else than the fulfilment of the law to love God with all our being. And ' the art of contemplation ' is nothing else than the application of the demands of love to man's relation with God. Hence as Fray Francisco de Osuna says : ' This manner of prayer is called the art of love.' But he clarifies this definition when he says : ' Furthermore, it is called union, for when man after this way attains to God, he becomes one spirit with him by an exchange of will, so that man wills nought but what God wills, neither does God withdraw himself from the will of man, but in all things they are one.' It is important to note that the love of God which is the end of contemplative prayer is the union of man's will with the divine will by the action of love. In other words contemplative prayer does not aim at inducing a mere sentiment of love but love itself—the union of the two wills of man and of God in mutual love, love as the activity of the will in its union with the divine will ; not mere passive sentiment. It is well to understand this, as it marks the distinction between the authentic prayer of contemplation and that pseudo-contemplation indulged in by people of a certain temperament.

Hence it is with the direction and discipline of the will that ' the art of contemplation ' is mainly concerned : but it is a direction and discipline governed by the laws or demands of love itself in the soul's quest for union with God. For it is only in proportion as man's desire becomes denuded of self-seeking and that love of self which is selfishness, and becomes responsive to the workings of the divine will, that he can become proficient in contemplative prayer. Yet it must be well borne in mind that in contemplative prayer the human will co-operates actively with the divine will. If on the one hand ' man wills nought but what God wills ' yet the human will does not merely register the divine will, but makes the divine will its own. The divine will and the human actively co-operate. There is a profound significance in Fray Osuna's remark : ' Neither does God withdraw himself from the will of man.' Divine love purifies and sublimates the human will, but does not destroy it or reduce it to mere passivity. Man remains still master of himself even in his submission to the will of God ; or rather should we say, becomes more master of himself in the liberty of spirit which he gains in his active association with the will of God.

And it is in this active conformity of his will with the divine will in love, that the contemplative begins to know God and himself with a new, more intimate knowledge and understanding. Before he begins to experience this closer intimacy with God, he

may be said rather to *know about* God and the divine mysteries of life; now he begins really to know God and his relation to God in some way as he knows himself. This knowledge, as the experts in contemplative prayer insist, can be gained only in prayer itself: 'No man can teach it, but only God.' All that the most expert master can teach us is the road and the self-discipline by which one can arrive at the prayer itself.

There have been a multitude of books written on 'the art of contemplative prayer,' not all very helpful to the beginner. Moreover in many of these books the simple rules of guidance are so imbedded in disquisitions on the personal experiences of the writer, as frequently to bewilder the mere novice. The merit of *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* by Fray Francisco de Osuna, here given in an English version, is that notwithstanding its lack of arrangement, it does address itself to the beginner and keeps in view the special need of the beginner. Fray Osuna starts out with the principle that contemplative prayer is for the many, not for the few; and he is at pains to encourage the normal good Catholic to practise it, warning him not to be put off by the class of writers and spiritual directors who so fence off the prayer of contemplation with warnings and danger signals, as to discourage all but the most hardy and adventurous spirits.

One recommendation this book has: it was the reading of *The Third Spiritual Alphabet* which led S. Teresa of Jesus, in her early timorous days, to go forward in the way of mental prayer—a precious encouragement to one who at that early period and for many years after, received nothing but discouragement from her spiritual advisers. There are many in like circumstances who have not been so fortunate as S. Teresa.

FR. CUTHBERT, O.S.F.C.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

THIS Spanish classic has a double interest as being the guide of S. Teresa when, as a nun of twenty years of age, she was raised to supernatural prayer. She tells us in Chapter IV of her *Life* how she first read Osuna's book: 'My uncle, of whom I have said that he lived in our road, gave me a book called the *Third Alphabet*, which treats of the Prayer of Recollection. I had read good books during this first year (for I would read no others, understanding the harm that they had done me), but I did not know how to proceed in prayer, nor how to recollect myself. I was therefore greatly pleased with this book and determined to follow the way of prayer with all my might. And as the Lord had given me the gift of tears, and I took pleasure in reading, I began to spend short periods of time in solitude, to go often to confession, and to enter upon that way of prayer, taking this book as my guide. For I found no master—that is, no confessor—who could understand me, though I sought for one twenty years after this time. . . . God began to show such favours to me, even at the beginning, that at the end of this time that I was here, which was almost nine months in solitude, the Lord began to comfort me so much in this way, that he granted me the favour of the Prayer of Quiet. I was not so free from sin as the book admonished me to be, but I passed that by, for such watchfulness seemed to me almost impossible. . . . At times I even attained to the Prayer of Union, though I understood not what either Quiet or Union was, nor how greatly they were to be esteemed.' Professor Allison Peers says that Fray Osuna was incomparably the greatest of the men whose works S. Teresa read and dwelt upon,[1] and Fray Silverio de Santa Teresa, her latest editor, declares in his edition of her works that: 'The *Third Alphabet* is the book that had the strongest influence over her mysticism.'[2] The very interesting study *L'Amour Divin, essai sur les sources de Sainte Thérèse*, by Gaston Etchegoyen, Paris,

[1] *Spanish Mysticism*, London, 1924, p. 13.
[2] *Obras de Santa Teresa de Jesus*, Burgos, 1915, vol. i, p. 35.

1923, stresses strongly the preponderance of Osuna's influence over the mysticism of S. Teresa.

As the classification and development of prayer inaugurated by S. Teresa was unknown by Fray Osuna, it is often very difficult to compare their teaching ; all the degrees coming under the title of ' recollection ' in his treatise. The Franciscan writer's work does not seem to go further than the prayer of union, and he says little of the physical effects of advanced states of prayer.

The copy of the *Third Alphabet* used by the Saint is preserved in the convent of Avila. Mrs. Cunninghame Graham, in her *Santa Teresa* (p. 100), writes : ' Its yellow pages bear the traces of constant study. Whole passages are heavily scored and underlined, whilst on the margins, a cross, a heart, a hand pointing (her favourite marks) indicate the . . . thoughts which seemed to her most worthy of notice in the Gothic text.'

The translator thanks Professor Allison Peers for the use he has allowed her to make of his translation and notes.

The quotations from S. Teresa's works are made from the translations by a Benedictine of Stanbrook and sometimes from those of David Lewis.

This translation of the *Tercer Abecedario Espiritual* has been made from Volume XVI of the *Nueva Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* (Madrid, 1911).

THE TRANSLATOR.

DEDICATION

THIRD PART OF THE BOOK ENTITLED
THE SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

DEDICATED TO THE MOST ILLUSTRIOUS AND VERY MAGNIFICENT SEÑOR DON DIEGO LOPEZ, DUKE OF ESCALONA, MARQUIS OF VILLENA, COUNT OF SANT ESTEVAN, CHIEF MAJORDOMO OF THE ROYAL HOUSE OF CASTILE

AS man's happiness consists in the final end for which we all hope, so in the accomplishment of a good work begun is found a well-earned quiescence, for no one should rest while at work, but should incite himself by the prospect of joy and satisfaction with which we should believe our Lord will reward the good work begun.

I think that our Sovereign Lord has vouchsafed a successful accomplishment of this work of your most illustrious Lordship's. You must not be surprised if I call it yours, as my great love for you has rightly made it so, for love makes what it loves its own. Hence, as Ricardo says, charity makes all things its own simply by delighting in them. This is a wonderful possession given by divine decree, saying: 'Every place, that your foot shall tread upon, shall be yours.'[1] Our spiritual foot is our affection, which should be free from dust, being washed and clean through our pure attachment to spiritual things, even though they belong to others, which make for us a ladder by which to climb to heaven.

To-day, spiritual graces and good works belong in common to the just, as in the days of the early Church. Let no one deny that by loving a virtue it is in a way made our own, for we make another's sin ours by loving it. Charity, by 'seeking not what is its own,' becomes owner of all that is good.

No right love so cherishes its own as not to wish to share it. By this generosity it receives a hundredfold and possesses all that is good in others even more securely than its own. For a man may feel vain-glory concerning his own merits, but rarely feels it in regard to those of others that he has annexed by love.

If, as we said, love makes what it loves its own, and the more so the greater the love, a man may hold so dear another's good work as to merit more by it than he who performed it. This does not lack authority, for Holy Scripture declares that the wise man is better than the strong, meaning that love for God, called honourable wisdom, may be so prudent that by rejoicing in other's good deeds, it may merit as much as the man who performed them.

[1] Deut. xi, 24.

I believe that the supreme love by which the Father and the Son communicate with one another ordained this source of merit on earth for the consolation of those who, like your Lordship, are very infirm and weak, so that they might supply by love for what they had not the strength to perform. Therefore they can neither complain nor make excuses to God, who cares more for love than for aught else.

Many competent judges like this book, but as I know your Lordship likes it still more, I dedicate it to you, for your greater love gives you a stronger right to it. In this work, I set love before all else, like David, who sought as heir to his kingdom, to sit upon his royal throne, him who best loved God. It was for this that the Saviour of the world chose S. Peter. Forgetting all the other qualifications of the Apostle, he questioned him solely as to his love, for he needed more than all the rest to be thus transformed by love, if he was to be left in Christ's place that he might represent him better.

Will your Illustrious Lordship, then, receive this book which I offer you with such good reason, for besides your being entitled to it by your charity (the best of claims because it includes so many rights), you have another title proper to you on account of your established rank. By means of this, I think your Lordship will have an equal share with the author in this work if you ensure its perpetuity, for as they say, to keep what you have gained is as good as to earn it.

PREFACE

TO THE THIRD PART OF THE BOOK CALLED THE SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

HAVING written the first two volumes fairly well, I need fresh grace from the Most Blessed Trinity (to whom I offer the three books) in order to complete the third. For without this grace, not only could I write no more, but I could not even love the holy practice of which it treats. Merely to love recollection is the gift of God, for the desire of wisdom makes men live for ever,[1] which seems peculiar to this exercise. I think the love of recollection always brings with it other good, and those who despise it err in more ways than this.

No one can injure himself by esteeming this way, though we know well that it is not for everybody. But our Lord God leads some souls by it and others have reached it solely by desiring it with all their heart, while some, who always strive for what is most hidden, seek it less discreetly than they should, though many saints have written on it for their guidance. Also, in these sublime matters, it is most dangerous to err, as many have done, not because they practised recollection, but because, while thinking they followed it, they withdrew into other pleasant little paths, regardless of the warnings of the saints, most of which will be given in this Alphabet.

Since some matters of mystical theology cannot well be explained in ordinary words nor understood by the inexperienced, we shall state that the most sacred Humanity of Christ our God and Lord can never, in itself, impede or hinder the purest and highest possible recollection, for if it were in its nature to do so, it would always and in every way obstruct recollection. As our Lady the Virgin was never so hindered by caring for the Infant Jesus, nor did his presence ever distract her mind by withdrawing it from the intense concentration on God which she always possessed in a higher degree than did any other Saint, it

[1] Wisdom, vi, 22.

follows that our Lord's sacred Humanity does not impede the soul's devout recollection of God. It is an imperfection in us that we should think it necessary to withdraw from holy thoughts of created things in order to rise more completely to God. Yet it must be noted that this defect with which we charge men closely united to God is better than our ordinary perfection, and is only termed imperfect in comparison with a more perfect state: the saying applies here: 'Better is the iniquity of a man, than a woman doing a good turn.'[1]

Neither in Christ our Redeemer nor in his Mother was this imperfection found, and some saints may at times have been without it, yet divine graces and gifts so increased in them that they were obliged to forgo the use of the senses on account of the influence which attracted the soul and drew it out of itself. Thus Adam, without any distraction which withdrew him from his perfect attention to God, named all the creatures that existed. 'Yet,' as S. Bernard says, 'when God wished to raise him to purely spiritual things, he sent Adam a sort of sleep, threw him into ecstasy, and drew his soul by a sublime operation away from what is known to the senses. God did this, not that Adam should not feel the pain of his rib's being removed, for slumber would not have sufficed for this save by a miracle, but that by this kind of slumber, the imagination and senses being stilled, Adam might receive more purely the spiritual influences of the Divinity.'

The more the capacity of the soul increases, dilated by love, the greater will be the infusion of gifts required to deprive it of the use of the senses. Hence, when a contemplative is rapt in ecstasy either on account of his limited capacity or the sublimity of the gift, people act wrongly in attributing it to the former cause, although the recipient may safely do so.

In heaven there will be no ecstasies nor raptures, and even here they are lacking to many persons closely united to God,[2] because in the saints each faculty does its own work without hindering or

[1] Ecclus. xlii, 14. Fray Osuna writes at length in Treatise xvii of the way in which the recollected are to follow Christ's Humanity and Divinity.

[2] S. Teresa's teaching agrees with this. She says, speaking of locutions, raptures, etc.: 'There are many saints who never knew what it was to receive one such favour, while others who have received them are not saints at all.' *Castle*, M. vi, ch. ix, 19, the whole of which chapter treats of this subject, and warns souls against seeking such favours. See also *Camino*, chs. xvii and xviii. Osuna, like the Saint, values them for the humility they produce (Treatise xix, ch. ii), but blames the ignorant for speaking scornfully of them.

weakening another. Thus, when Christ was in the garden, his divine will ordered that he should die and the will of the rational soul obeyed, but the sensitive will of the flesh refused, without hindering the undiminished operations of the two former powers. I mention this because in the imperfect, when the will of the flesh grows strong, it usually weakens the reason, and as the reason strengthens, it diminishes the bodily senses. This was not the case with Christ, and it is the same with the blessed and perfect men; one thing does not obstruct the other, but each bodily power concerns itself with material matters and the spiritual with spiritual affairs, for grace does not disorder nor destroy nature, but perfects it in its workings as medicine heals the sick.

Hence it follows that neither the sacred Humanity nor any other created thing in itself impedes contemplation, however high. If we like to say that visible things do so impede us, for our narrow minds cannot attend to both things together, it is true: but we must recognize that the defect lies in us, not in things created.[1] Thus Christ was called 'to the Jews indeed a stumbling-block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness,'[2] for they, being perverse, changed good into evil. They could not but sin in doing this, but in the other case it is no sin but a lesser good, as we are hindered by what is in itself no hindrance, for if creatures could frustrate contemplation, it would not have been revealed that they would fight against the wicked on the day of judgement on the side of the Lord,[3] who created them not to obstruct, but to aid us. For as woman was made as the help-mate of man, so material things were created to help the spiritual, especially the soul, which could not otherwise begin to rise to the invisible things of God.

Material things assist not only men but the angels too, who, according to S. Augustine,[4] rose to a knowledge of the Creator by contemplating in order the works of the six days. Thus we all mount and descend, each in our own way, by the ladder which is the law of created things. We rise to the knowledge of the Creator and descend to the knowledge of ourselves. Only God, on the highest step of the ladder, is immutable, for he alone necessarily enlightens himself: he does not descend, for he knows all things in himself; nor does he rise, for he makes no use of them to understand himself.

If all created things are a ladder for the feet of the wise to mount to God, far more must the sacred Humanity of Christ,

[1] Wisdom v. [2] 1 Cor. i, 23. [3] 1 Cor. i, 23.
[4] Cf. Treatise xxii, ch. v, passim.

the way, the truth, and the Life, be so. He came that we might have life more abundantly, that by this going in by his Divinity and out by his sacred Humanity, we might find pasture. Thy Church does not chant without mystery that we know God visible in order to be rapt in love of things invisible, for if the other things we see incite us to love and contemplate God, his sacred Humanity enraptures us and almost forces us to do so. Therefore Christ is said by the prophet Ezechiel[1] to have a face like a diamond,[2] attractive and like a flint, which at a slight stroke of meditation gives forth a spark of love that sets on fire hearts that are inflammable and prepared to receive it.

This is testified to by S. Thomas the Apostle, who by touching our Lord's wounds was healed of the wounds of his soul and recognized Christ's Divinity, which he confessed at once and so deserved to be blessed as a faithful Catholic.

Although visible things contain undiminished truth, we are told in books that it is well for those who wish to reach high and pure contemplation to set aside creatures and the sacred Humanity in order to mount higher and to receive a more complete communication of spiritual things.[3] Of this, S. Cyprian says: 'The

[1] iii, 8.

[2] The Spanish gives *diamante*, but the Douai version has 'adamant.'

[3] S. Teresa scored this passage in the copy of the book at Avila. No doubt it had considerable influence over her when she began to be a contemplative. She seems to have been referring to it when she wrote:

'Some books strongly advise us to set aside all corporal imagination and attach ourselves solely to the contemplation of the Divinity. For they say that in the case of those who have advanced so far [as the illuminative way] even the Humanity of Christ would embarrass or hinder them in attaining perfect contemplation. In defence of this opinion, they quote our Lord's words to the Apostles about the coming to them of the Holy Ghost after his ascension. It seems to me that if they had believed, as they did afterwards, that he was both God and man, they would have found no hindrance in it.' The whole of the rest of chapter xxii of the *Life* treats of the error of such a practice. See also the *Castle*, M. vi, ch. vii, 6 *sqq.*, where the Saint says: 'I have said enough to prove to those who require it that, however spiritual their state, it is an error so to avoid thinking of corporeal things as to imagine that meditation on the most sacred Humanity can injure the soul. People allege, in defence, that our Lord told his disciples that it was expedient for them that he should go from them. This I cannot admit. He did not say so to his blessed Mother, for her faith was firm. She knew he was both God and man; and although she loved him more dearly than did his disciples, it was in so perfect a way that his bodily presence was a help to her. The faith of the Apostles must have been weaker than it was later on, and than ours has reason to be. I assure you, daughters,

fulness of spiritual presence could not come while Christ's body could be seen by the Apostles.' S. Bernard, S. Gregory, S. Augustine, Gerson, and all who have spoken on Christ's having ascended to heaven in order that the Holy Spirit might descend, agree with S. Cyprian. They say that the Apostles were held back by their love for the sacred Humanity of which it was necessary that they should be deprived that they might take their flight to higher things by desiring the coming of the Holy Ghost.

It is certain that the Humanity of our Lord, formed by the Holy Ghost, did not hinder the coming of the Paraclete, for the Apostles could have contained what the narrow womb of the Virgin contained when the Holy Ghost entered it to form that Humanity. But it is said that the imperfect state of the Apostles would have been an obstacle ; therefore our Lord did not declare absolutely that it was expedient that he should go, but that it was expedient *for them*[1] because they were not capable of enjoying all these favours at once.

Since it was well for the Apostles to cease for a time from the contemplation of our Lord's Humanity so as to occupy themselves entirely with that of the Divinity, it seems suitable also for those who aspire to a higher state. For as a rule, men do not rise from imperfection to the highest perfection without passing through the medium state of perfection. It is right therefore to leave what is good in order to possess it more fully, at the same time forsaking our imperfections, like one who gives up riches, which are not evil in themselves, for the sake of avoiding avarice and the anxieties that our frailty connects with them.

that I consider this a most dangerous idea whereby the devil might end by robbing us of our devotion to the most blessed Sacrament. The mistake I formerly made did not lead me so far as this, but I did not care so much about meditating on our Lord Jesus Christ, preferring to remain absorbed, awaiting spiritual consolations. . . . Thus I lost much time and did not make progress in virtue nor advance in prayer. . . .

'How much less should we wilfully endeavour to abstain from thinking of our only good and remedy, the most sacred Humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ ! I cannot believe that any one really does this ; people misunderstand their own minds and so harm both themselves and others. Of this at least I can assure them ; they will never thus enter the two last mansions of the Castle. If they lose their Guide, our good Jesus, they cannot find the way, and it will be much if they have stayed safely in the former mansions.' *Ibid., sqq.* Constant references to this effect occur throughout S. Teresa's writings. She maintains that meditation is not to be excluded from recollection, but that the one completes the other.

[1] S. John xvi, 17.

Men take the prey from the hawk lest, being satiated, it should fly no more, and they give the child no milk to make it eat solid food, though a sensible man would eat all that comes without caring too much about his choice. So, perfect men are 'set in order in charity' in every way, but what helps them hurts others. As S. Bernard says: 'There are two kinds of love: the one carnal, the other spiritual: they allow of four manners of loving: to love the flesh carnally and the spirit carnally, the flesh spiritually and the spirit spiritually. In these four manners there is a progress and ascent from the lowest to the highest, for God took flesh in order that men who love the flesh carnally might rise to love him spiritually. He, speaking and living with men, was first loved by them carnally, but when he chose to lay down his life for his friends, they really loved the spirit more, though still carnally. Hence, when Christ spoke of his Passion, S. Peter answered: "Lord, be it far from thee, this shall not be unto thee,"[1] though the Apostles might have known that the Mystery of the Redemption was to be wrought by that Passion. During the Passion, they loved the flesh spiritually, but when our Lord died and ascended to heaven, they loved the spirit spiritually; now they sing joyfully: "If we have known Christ according to the flesh: now we know him so no longer."'[2] The above is quoted from S. Bernard.

We must not, however, consider that love called carnal is wrong nor to be taken in the bad sense usually attributed to it: as these four manners of loving only distinguish between more and more ardent love in order to teach us to love Christ our Lord more purely, after the example of the Apostles.

[1] S. Matt. xvi, 22. [2] 2 Cor. v, 16.

There follows the letter A of the Third Alphabet.[1]

THE THIRD SPIRITUAL ALPHABET

FIRST TREATISE

TREATS OF THE CONTINUAL VIGILANCE NEEDED BY THE SOUL WHICH STRIVES IN SINGLE-MINDEDNESS TO ATTAIN TO GOD, SAYING: 'THE WHOLE BEING AND MIND MUST ADVANCE TOGETHER'

CHAPTER I

COMMUNION WITH GOD MAY BE ATTAINED TO IN THIS LIFE BY ALL

BEFORE explaining this Alphabet, it will be well to state three considerations which appear essential for anyone who seeks to attain to God, also for all the ordinary spiritual exercises.

The first is that friendship and communion with God are possible in this life and exile, and that in no small degree, but with a closer and stronger bond than has ever existed between brethren, or mother and child. That this friendship or communion between God and man is called spiritual does not imply that it is not of great importance and certainty, nor am I speaking of the divine approbation or men's doubt as to whether they are in a state of grace, which we shall discuss later on. I speak of the communion sought and found by those who strive to attain to prayer and devotion, than which nothing in this world is more certain, more delightful, or more precious.

Do not suppose that those who weep and mourn in this life, who hunger and are poorly clad, who are overcome with weariness, despised, persecuted, whose eyes are sunken and their cheeks pallid, and who, reduced to skin and bone, are at war with the self-indulgent, enjoy these austerities, while you, who live as you

[1] The letter A begins in the Spanish with *Anden siempre juntamente la persona y spíritu.*

will, find life a burden. These men would soon succumb unless our Lord God went to meet them as their friend with open arms with greater alacrity and true comfort than the mother whose little one runs to her for protection. She opens first her arms to her child and then her breasts, and satisfies his hunger; she presses her face to his and his sobs and tears cease, for he fears no longer.[1]

This Lord God of ours so longs for friends that we read of his having treated the sinner who came from afar as his servant, or even more kindly, for we are told that he went forth to meet him, though the mother does not usually rise, but only opens her arms to receive her child.[2] Yet God, as S. Luke writes,[3] running to meet the sinner, fell upon his neck and kissed him, and ordered that the first robe should be put on him and a ring on his hand as a bond of friendship; nor did he forget shoes for his feet. Having killed the fatted calf, he invited the neighbours, and a feast was held with songs of joy.

If these things apply in figure to the spiritual manner in which a great sinner is treated by God, who gave us his own Son, what do you think he will do for a just man who seeks him sincerely and constantly? I know that without doubt the just enjoy paradise both in this life and the next, as sinners suffer hell both here and hereafter. The world gives you all you look for and all the enjoyment your heart desires: do you think that God sleeps or turns a deaf ear to this? Being evil yourself, you think wrongly of God and render him sloth and tepidity in place of a servant's efforts to seek him and renounce worldly things. You suppose

[1] This paragraph was underlined by S. Teresa. She mentions in the *Castle* S. Francis of Assisi rushing through the forest in a transport of joy and crying that he was 'the herald of the great King,' and S. Peter of Alcantara, who retired into the desert to proclaim the praises of God. *Castle*, M. vi, ch. vi, 12, 13. In the *Life*, ch. xvi, the Saint describes her experience of this joy. She compares herself to the woman who called in her friends to rejoice with her and to David with his harp.

[2] Speaking of the prayer of quiet, S. Teresa writes: 'As an infant does not know how it grows and is nourished—indeed, often without any effort of its own, the milk is put into its mouth, so it is in this case with the graces infused into the soul: it knows nothing itself nor does anything, and is unable to imagine whence or how this great good came to it. It only realizes that this is the keenest delight that can be felt in this life, even if all the world's happiness could be enjoyed at once. It can compare it to nothing but to the endearments of a mother who tenderly loves her child and feeds and fondles it.' (*Concept.*, ch. iv). The mother and child is a favourite comparison both of Osuna's and S. Teresa's. See *Camino*, ch. xxxi; *Castle*, M. v, 1, 10, etc.

[3] S. Luke xv.

that there is nothing in this life except what perishes, and the ordinary practices of religion. Know, as S. Augustine says, that God is no mocker, and were he not willing to sustain us, would not so repeatedly admonish us to draw near to him. Ordinary graces in the Church are for ordinary people. God keeps other special graces for special souls, and these ordinary graces contain others experienced in a different manner by souls that love him better than the rest. Finally, you must understand that it is possible, and not very difficult for the soul to hold a communion in this mortal life with God who is immortal which is closer and more loving than that between the angels of however high a rank.

You cannot fully understand this communion with God, as you only know of it from what is said in Holy Scripture. Consider what God says by Isaias: 'Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all you that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her. That you may suck, and be filled with the breasts of her consolations: that you may milk out, and flow with delights, from the abundance of her glory. For thus saith the Lord: "Behold I will bring upon her as it were a river of peace, and as an overflowing torrent the glory of the Gentiles, which you shall suck; you shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you . . . you shall see and your heart shall rejoice."'[1] In these words God shows his tender love for the soul, the peaceful Jerusalem in which God dwells in most restful peace, and so great is the joy of this friendship that God invites the soul to it as to a very great festival, for his feasts in this world are nothing but the delights he shares with his friends.

The second point is that since God is no respecter of persons, this communion is no less possible for you, O man, whoever you may be, than it is for others, for you are no less made in the image of God than they are,[2] nor do I suppose you have less desire for happiness. Yet being not what God, but your free-will, has made you, I expect you will declare that your age, your calling, character, or ill-health, or mental capacity excuses or cuts you off from it. I know not how to answer you except in the words of the wise man: 'He that hath a mind to depart from a friend, seeketh occasions: he shall ever be subject to reproach.'[3] Whether your excuses satisfy yourself, I do not know: I know that they scandalize me, and I say with S. Augustine that I wholly disbelieve you, for nothing can deprive you of what is so completely in your power. If you declared that you could not fast nor take

[1] Isaias lxvi, 10–14. [2] See Treatise ix, ch. i. [3] Prov. xviii, 1.

the discipline, nor wear rough clothes, nor work, nor journey, we could believe you ; but if you say you cannot love, we do not believe you. If S. Augustine says this of love for one's enemies, how much more truly could it be said of love for God for which there are so many more motives !

The third consideration is that whatever the means by which this communion is sought, the soul must feel a solicitude which will not let it rest and is directed solely to seeking God. This intention or solicitude can only be explained by comparisons. We see a person who has lost something seek everywhere for it : he suspects it may be hidden in any place. When on a journey, a good traveller always has in mind his destination—and makes all his plans for it. He looks forward to the future ; rises early, and retires to rest early when he gets to the place. If he is tired, the thought that he must go on gives him strength. He who mines for gold is so eager that he fancies every little piece of rock contains it, and at each blow he gives, expects[1] to find some, never ceasing his examination until it has proved hopeless. The fisherman anxiously watches the float to see whether the fish bite, and thinks of nothing during his sport but what he has caught or will catch. I believe that no one finds God by whatever means without this intent and watchful solicitude : it cannot be effected by any means except by seeking him. This solicitude is of two kinds : the one is infused by God, the other obtained by our own effort. The former does not allow a man to sleep or eat or live in peace ; it is a spur and stimulus which will not let the soul rest. Of this the wise man says : ' He that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth the oxen therewith, and is occupied in their labours, and his whole talk is about the offspring of bulls.'[2] Christ is he who holds the plough, which is the cross with which he ploughs the hearts of his own, and he is said to hold it though he was nailed to it, because it was in his

[1] S. Teresa bids her nuns search within the hearts of their sisters, for if they dig that mine they will discover gold. In her youth she was very fond of jewellery and often uses it as a symbol, in her writings, of the virtues, the gifts we offer God, the pearl of contemplation, etc. Of the pain of absence from God the Saint says : ' The soul was purified by this pain, burnished or refined as gold in a crucible so that it might be better enamelled by the gifts of God.' (*Life*, xx).

S. Teresa constantly speaks of jewels as symbols of our offerings to God, of his graces bestowed on us that decorate our souls, purified by sufferings like gold in the crucible. In mystic prayer, the presence of Christ is within the soul as a jewel in an enclosed casket which he sometimes opens, showing the vision of his Humanity. *Castle*, vi, ch. ix.

[2] Ecclus. xxxviii, 26.

power to will whether he should be fastened to it or no. This Lord glories in the goad ; that is, the contrition and sorrow for sins he causes in many souls, which pleases him. But he wounds others, as it were, more deeply with this goad and stimulus. These are lazy oxen : he rouses them and is said to be occupied in their labours because all their works are directed to seeking God. These are the offspring of bulls wounded by him, since with the vehemence caused by this gift they strive to imitate the deeds of saints of former times and to resemble them to some extent. With such as these God speaks, as the text says, for he reveals many things to them.

Those who have this gift, or some slight touch of it, should profit by it, for as this fervour and longing for God does not, as a rule, last long, they should choose fitting means and lose no time, for they will make more progress with it in one year than in three years without it. If some beast of burden was lent you with which to do a certain work and you idled away the time, when the master asked you for it back, your task would not be done. Do not act in this way, brother, for God demands interest on his loans and that you should gain by what he gives you by using it, and if you make no profit, he seeks it from others. Do not suffer your longings to decay ; the candle will go out and leave you in the dark, and when the grace has gone you will be more tepid than if you had never received it. The effects of this gift on the soul are many ; chiefly, an anxiety and anguish which weary the heart and incite, arouse, and constrain it to find no repose except in God. I have met people in this state who, as an outlet to their feelings, went forth into the fields to cry aloud and weep and beg God to teach them how to do his holy will. Those who possess this gift and seek for helpful spiritual exercises profit more and more. I have known others who have not understood how to respond to it and have given themselves to corporal penance, thinking this would suffice, though as S. Paul says : ' bodily exercise is profitable to little,'[1] if interior exercise ceases. Others only respond by words and reading, without entering into themselves, and it all evaporates like quicksilver when left exposed.

As for you, brother, if you wish to succeed better, seek God in your heart ; do not go outside yourself, for he is nearer to you than yourself,[2] of which this letter warns you : ' Advance must always be made by the whole being and spirit together.'

[1] 1 Tim. iv, 8. [2] S. Augustine. *Tu intimior intimo meo.*

CHAPTER II

THE FIRST EXPLANATION OF THIS LETTER

THE word 'spirit' (*espíritu*) in this place means the mind, which wanders hither and thither like the wind. Job's friend used it in this sense when he said: 'I am full of matter to speak of, and the spirit of my bowels straiteneth me.'[1] Memory is called 'bowels' in Proverbs, where Solomon says: 'Apply thy heart to my doctrine: which shall be beautiful for thee, if thou keep it in thy bowels, and it shall flow in thy lips, that thy trust may be in the Lord.'[2] The first speaker declares that the spirit of his bowels forced him to speak because the thoughts, ideas, and reasons held in his memory were many and forcible; therefore the *spirit* must mean the mind, which, like the wind, wanders where it will.

The meaning of this letter is that whatever your actions, your mind must accompany them and not wander in different directions, the body being in one place and the heart in another. Yet you serve God with your mortal body which is fit rather to be the food of worms than to be seen of men, while your mind is bent on all kinds of vanities. I can only say of you, especially when you are at the Divine Office or at Mass, that you remind me of Satan who intruded himself among the sons of God. When God, knowing his restlessness and turbulence and that he was never still nor collected his thoughts, asked him: 'Whence comest thou?' Satan answered shamelessly: 'I have gone round about the earth, and walked through it.'[3] You are like him, for when you are among the sons of God, the angels and just men, if they asked you on what your mind was bent and from whence you had come, that is, what preparation you had made beforehand, you would be obliged to reply with Satan that you had been round about the whole world with your wandering thoughts, for you had rejected no vain imaginations. No one questions you regarding religion, for your material, commonplace mind is occupied solely with senseless, wrong-headed subjects. Think over this letter, for it is of serious importance to you; do not ask me to say no more on the subject, for you will never attain to any perfection without practising it.

No one pours liquid into a cracked and broken vase which can hold nothing. Your heart is divided into as many pieces as the

[1] Job xxxii, 18. [2] Prov. xxii, 17, 18. [3] Job ii, 2.

cares you hold : each care is a broken piece ; and do you think that God will pour his grace into such a useless vessel ? Ask the wise man, who says : ' The heart of a fool is like a broken vessel, and not all wisdom shall it hold.'[1]

God instils this devout and very sweet wisdom of which we speak into the hearts of the righteous, the golden vessels and cups from which he drinks our good desires, symbolized by the goblets from which King Solomon drank which were all gold. A golden vase cannot easily be broken, neither can the heart of the just be divided between different interests without urgent necessity. But the hearts of unreflecting men are like the ill-baked clay vessels which David was given in the desert when persecuted by Absolom.[2] This clay vessel is broken because the man's exterior and worldly actions are not referred to God nor performed purely for his sake, but some are done to please men, others by the inspiration of the devil, others for pleasure or vain-glory, so that his heart being divided, cannot retain the grace of devotion or the sweetness of the heavenly liquor. Perhaps the wise man says that the heart of the fool cannot contain all wisdom because in Holy Scripture this actual taste of God is so called, for it satisfies all the longings of the devout soul. Hence Solomon says in Ecclesiasticus : ' All wisdom is from the Lord God.'[3] The wisdom of worldlings is not termed ' all wisdom,' for it is not even a part of it, because they are wise regarding evil, which is a lack of wisdom, just as the power to sin is not power but weakness, for to know how to do evil is to know how to err. Therefore the wisdom of the wicked is not wisdom, but ignorance and vice, or rather, diabolical cunning and malice. Of such men the Apostle says : ' Many walk of whom I have told you often (and now tell you weeping) that they are enemies of the cross of Christ ; whose end is destruction : whose God is their belly : and whose glory is in their shame : who mind earthly things.'[4] Yet the more shattered the vase, the better it holds this earthly wisdom, though the reverse is the case with the divine wisdom, for he who baits the most traps and tricks the most people with his bargains, is reckoned the wisest.

Be warned, brother : solder your heart and adorn it ; join the pieces, which are your cares, so that with all your faculties you

[1] Ecclus. xxi, 17. The Spanish gives : ' And not all wisdom shall it hold ' instead of ' and no wisdom at all shall it hold,' as in the Douai version.

[2] 2 Kings xviii, 28. [3] Eccles. i, 1.

[4] Phil. iii, 18, 19. The Spanish gives ' who know earthly things.'

may draw near to God. Cover the vase of your heart lest the dust of idle thoughts should fall into it.

Beneath the cover of your heart which is withdrawn from vain and superfluous cares, keep strict watch: that is, a firm resolution to persevere in your recollection as this letter of our Alphabet directs. You would think a man very rash who rode an unmanageable horse without reins, as it would need short and strong ones. Yet you do worse; for he only risks his body, but you risk body and soul unless you hold in the hand of discretion the rein of caution with which to jerk the bridle of your unmanageable heart, holding back its impulses and reining in its bad habits. Of this the wise man warns you: 'He that followeth after words only, shall have nothing. But he that possesseth a mind, loveth his own soul, and he that keepeth prudence shall find good things.'[1] He 'follows words only' who lets them pass through his mind and retains nothing, for the vase of his heart is broken. But he who 'possesses his mind,' holding the reins over his thoughts, 'loveth his own soul,' and seeks much good, for as the wise man adds: 'and he that keepeth prudence shall find good things.' The same writer declares: 'A secure mind is like a continual feast.'[2]

Would that you wrote this first letter of the Alphabet in your heart, that you might know what this feast is and might perhaps taste some broken scrap from it. If you contrast it with its opposite, you may, to some extent, understand what is this feast, and its plenitude of joy and continual consolation felt by those who recollect their mind, for the more you indulge your thoughts, the greater will be your hunger and desire for many things, as the wise man declares. The soul is dissolute and unrestrained when accustomed to let thoughts and mind wander wrongly where they will; when they return, weary and dying of hunger, they contain the seeds of new desires and evil longings.

Think this matter over: you will own its truth if you consider your vanity and laxity which engender in you such diffidence in spiritual things that you doubt whether they exist or are only a mockery, and to read or speak of them seems tedious or child's play. Believe me, all this comes from the laxity, unrestraint, or dissipation of mind, for as the wise man says: 'He that walketh sincerely, walketh confidently: but he that perverteth his ways

[1] Prov. xix, 7, 8. The Spanish gives 'he that possesseth his memory.'
[2] Prov. xv, 15. Here again the Spanish gives 'memory' for mind.

shall be manifest.'[1] Evidently, the more you withdraw from cares and imaginations, the more sincere will be your mind, and, as experience shows, the greater will be your confidence in divine truths: but if you pervert your ways of conduct, you will be like the youth to whom Solomon speaks, who was erring from the right path: 'A young man according to his way.'[2]

These ways are destroyed when unused as are the paths of earth; but when trodden become wider and clearly visible. So it is with the ways of the heart; as yours are destroyed through your not using them, no wonder that you do not know how to walk in them. Return, return to them and let your whole being and mind travel together. Be not like Cain who 'went out from the face of the Lord, and dwelt as a fugitive on the earth.'[3]

If God commanded that the garment which had a 'flying and wandering leprosy'[4] (*erratica, ut ita dicam*) should be burnt, do you not think that he will permit and order that you should be punished? For if God does not 'take care for oxen'[5] he must care less for garments, and these words must be written for you. Your body, which is the garment of your soul, has a 'flying and wandering leprosy' when full of vagrant fancies and imaginations which disturb your soul; in punishment for this, if you neglect to drive them away, God will allow you to be burnt with the fire of evil desires.

CHAPTER III

HOW GOD REMEDIES WANDERING THOUGHTS

SINCE from this laxity of heart and want of control over your mind you incur such harm and miss so much good, it would be well, as this first letter says, if you kept your heart with you and did not forfeit the improvement you have made. If through old-established, evil custom, your thoughts wander so that you cannot direct them, turn to God, tell him your weakness, and ask his help with faith. He will hear you at once, for Isaias says of our Lord God: 'He shall set up a standard unto the nations, and shall assemble the fugitives of Israel, and shall gather together the dispersed of Juda from the four quarters of the earth. And the envy of Ephraim shall be taken away, and the enemies of Juda shall perish.'[6]

[1] Prov. x, 9. [2] Prov. xxii, 6. [3] Gen. iv, 16.
[4] Lev. xiii, 57 [5] 1 Cor. ix, 9. [6] Isaias xi, 12, 13.

The standard God sets up in our interior 'nations' and tendencies is the gift and grace spoken of in the first part of this Letter, which is given to beginners who ask God for it with faith and a firm resolution to seek him. If you have not this gift, brother, beg it of our Lord, who will grant it you at once to incite you to seek and go to him. Do not complain that it is lacking to you; it would be more true to complain that you are lacking in correspondence to it. We fail God, who fails no one who seeks him faithfully, as he says to us by Jeremias: 'What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they have gone far from me, and have walked after vanity?'[1] This infused care and solicitude is called by Isaias the standard that assembles the fugitives, or the wandering thoughts of one who wishes to prepare his heart for God. This solicitude is granted by the Lord *gratis* to those who ask for it, as the town crier gives the first taste or draught of the wine he is crying free of cost; but the rest must be paid for. It often happens that those who begin to draw near to God feel devotion and are happy, but in a few days seem tepid and dry: this is because our Lord wants them to exert themselves, to prove what they are worth, so that they may, to some extent, by their labour, earn and deserve what is to be given them. By this you will understand how God wishes to 'gather together the dispersed of Juda'; that is, the devout soul, for 'Juda' means 'praise of the Lord,' and is the symbol of every faithful man who desires to praise him but whose cares are dispersed, as Isaias declares, throughout the four quarters of the earth, the east, the west, the north, and the south.

As in this greater world there are these four points, so there are in the lesser world of man. Thence, as from the former, come four winds or motions which move the lesser world: these are the four chief passions to be found in everyone—joy and sorrow, hope and fear. They are called *chief* because all the many other passions are included in them, as are the other winds in the four principal. The reason the heart is dispersed among so many affections, appetites, thoughts, desires, and cares is that these four passions live within it and their movements provoke these tempests and turbulence. From one quarter, the sunny east, comes joy: from the darkened west arises sorrow: earthly hope is from the south and fear from the north. The heart, in the midst of such diverse passions, attacked on every side, tries to satisfy each of them, so that its cares and efforts are divided between the four quarters of its little world. The words of Eze-

[1] Jerem. ii, 5.

chiel apply to it: 'There appeared upon the earth by the living creatures one wheel with four faces.'[1] The heart is called a wheel on account of its continual turning and movement which give it little rest and is said to appear on the earth, because in heaven it will look very different. Its four faces are the principal passions and impulses described: so-called because the face and expression show which passion predominates.

This wheel of four faces is said to be near the animals because we share these passions with the brutes, so that he who wishes to make spiritual progress must punish and dominate them lest they divide his heart between them. This our Lord does by means of his aid and grace, mitigating the four passions and fortifying against them the cardinal virtues which grace seems to wake from sleep. Justice controls joy, prudence opposes sadness, temperance controls hope, and fortitude moderates fear. The passions being repressed by the virtues, the heart is no longer dispersed and divided. Thus the dispersed are gathered together from the four quarters of the earth and the enemies slain, which are the evils following from the dispersion. Then there will be peace between Ephraim and Juda, between body and soul as Isaias calls it, their descendants being enemies, as S. Paul states are body and soul while such passions reign in man. In order to obtain this friendship and that the soul may give itself to God, they must not have the upper hand, nor must the heart squander itself on such cares. Christian philosophy warns its disciples to avoid and withdraw from them, saying: 'If you wish to contemplate supreme truth clearly, take the direct road: strike at joys, strike at fear, put human hopes to flight, and you will feel no sorrow, for where these passions hold sway, the darkened soul is held in fetters.'

From this you ought to understand that on the spiritual way you must get rid of superflous cares and mortify your passions, which take wings and new life from the employments and matters in which you engage yourself, so that I lay great stress upon your avoiding them that your heart should have less cause to disperse itself on them.

This advice is the first stone in the foundation of this prayer, as David said: 'The Lord buildeth up Jerusalem: he will gather together the dispersed of Israel.'[2] Jerusalem is your peaceful resolution; Israel is your mind seeking strenuously, to which the vision of God is promised and seen by faith even now. To raise your will to new perfection, wandering, harmful thoughts

[1] Ezech. i, 15. [2] Ps. cxlvi, 2.

must first be driven away, never to return. To this applies the first letter: 'Advance must always be made by the whole being and mind together.' This is a test as to whether the dispersed of Israel are gathered together: unless they are, know that you have yet to lay the first stone of your spiritual building.

CHAPTER IV

A FURTHER EXPLANATION OF THIS LETTER

ANOTHER point regarding this Letter is that you must always obey your conscience. Although necessary for everyone, this is particularly so for those who have received the desire of seeking God. They should be specially warned of it, for their conscience is hardly ever silent: it continually commands and advises them regarding higher perfection and prayer, bidding them refrain not only from the baneful vanities and customs of the world, but also from what is useless and to practise what is profitable.

According to this view the mind is the conscience and the whole being (or person) stands for the sensitive nature. That they should advance together denotes the conformity and peace or subjection to be kept by the sensitive nature which would otherwise break bounds and nourish a grudge which would make it hate its companion. Of this spirit which is the conscience, S. Paul says: 'The wisdom of the spirit is life and peace,'[1] by which he means the warnings of conscience that bring life and peace to man's heart.

As our earthly body, when animated by the vital spirit which is the soul, is said to live, and not otherwise, so when the sensitive nature is actuated and ruled by the warnings of conscience, it is declared to possess the life of grace so far as its nature permits, although it appears dead. Then man is at peace and concord with himself and the sensitive nature is guided by the reins of conscience, so that they advance together.

Christ our Redeemer warned the exterior man of this when he said: 'Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him: lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing.'[2] God utters a severe threat with this command, each word of which must be noted. I say that it is a command and a very stringent one, for the

[1] Rom. viii, 6. [2] S. Matt. v, 25, 26

adversary with whom we are bidden to agree quickly is the upright conscience which rebukes evil and teaches us what we ought to do. S. Chrysostom comments on these words : ' Nothing so certainly destroys our spiritual life as to defer and abandon good works, putting them off from day to day which often makes us fall away entirely.'

This applies to our Letter : ' Advancing together,' which means instant obedience to the conscience, for tardy obedience is not exact concordance. We may well fear the terrible threat of the Almighty that unless we obey, he will deliver us into the hands of the devil, his officer, to be thrown into the prison of hell, where, under great torture, we shall be asked for the last farthing, which means that we shall suffer intolerable and eternal pain, being punished for our venial as well as for our mortal sins. I think that they will also demand of you, under severe torture, the good your conscience bade you do which you neglected though you might well have done it. Who knows whether they will not require of you the profit that might have come of these good deeds to you and the whole Church, for which you will be obliged to pay the last farthing ; and it is uncertain whether an idle word will be forgiven.

Then, brother, always advance with your conscience while you are on the high-road of this world. Do not say : ' I will begin on such and such a day,' but commence at once, for everything can be recovered except past time with which our life too passes. Time is fleeting and takes life with it and you let it go. The proverb says that all things pass away with time. That earthly, temporal, fleeting things should do so, is no great loss to you. But if your spiritual progress should fleet by, it would be grievous. For what is material, though it passes, will be renewed when our bodies are, and there will be a new heaven and earth with purified elements. But whatever you failed to gain or you lost in the past will be for ever lost without recovery.

If you say that God made one day follow another so that what we omitted to-day we might do to-morrow, it is true that we can do so, but we cannot supply for the past without losing the present, as each day ought to produce its own fruit, like a slave who earns by the day for his master, and if one day is missing, it is lost for ever.

Therefore attend to the words of the wise man : ' Whatsoever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly,'[1] for neither corporal works nor meditation nor knowledge of human or even of sacred science

[1] Ecclus. ix, 10. The Spanish gives *presto*, quickly, instead of earnestly.

will be yours in hell, whither you are hastening by your evil life.

Between the conscience and the sensitive nature there is a right or a wrong agreement; the former when the sensitive nature obeys the warnings of conscience; the latter when conscience is silent as though half consenting to the sensual inclination to sin: hence some men are said to have a good, others a bad, conscience. Our Letter teaches that the conscience and sensitive nature must conform, but it must be in rectitude, for as the wise man says: 'With three things my spirit is pleased, which are approved before God and men: the concord of brethren, and the love of neighbours, and man and wife that agree well together.'[1] Taken literally these words contain truth, but far more when applied spiritually to our subject. These three conformities and agreements symbolize right concord between the sensitive nature and the reason, for conscience is the reason and natural light of our understanding which teaches us how we ought to act.

The reason, and the sensitive nature which consists of the senses and an inclination to pleasure, are called brethren. Not that they are so by nature, for the one is rather celestial than earthly and the other the reverse, but because they will both be heirs of the master they serve, though in a very different degree. Reason, and the interior conscience which originate in the intellect, will inherit much, and the sensitive nature which arises from the bodily senses will receive little in comparison, and the inheritance will come from the father whom they gratify. If they gratify the devil, the world, or the flesh, from these evil fathers they will inherit evil. If they please the celestial Father, they will be heirs of the kingdom of heaven promised to all his sons. The sensitive nature, too, will have its share, for our bodily senses, if they obeyed reason which is the dictate of conscience, will enjoy consummate happiness and be occupied in a perfect work.

CHAPTER V

OF THE CONCORD YOU MUST HAVE WITHIN YOU

CONCORD between two brethren is approved before God and men, as the wise man says, but the lesser must serve the greater, obey him, and consent to be punished and rebuked if he errs. It is well-known that the sensitive nature, the younger brother, is in some perfect men subject and conformed to reason, though never

[1] Ecclus. xxv, 1, 2.

completely, therefore theologians usually say that the first movements are not under a man's control. Even so, reason must frown upon its younger brother lest he go astray. But the second wrong movement is a venial sin attributable to the reason on account of its not correcting the first. What shall we say of the brutal, depraved men whom David compares to the beasts because this elder brother has forfeited his power and honour, making himself the lesser, yielding to the sensitive nature and almost renouncing his own rights ? I can only declare of their reason and sensitive nature that they are worse than Jacob and Esau, of whom it was prophesied : ' The elder shall serve the younger.'[1] Their mind serves sensuality because it thinks only of the material pleasures proper to corruptible flesh, and, however strictly they are forbidden, can always give reasons for indulging in them such as that they are necessary for life and health. It never submits without murmuring and saying that coarse food injures it. All such a person thinks of is his food, like Esau who rashly sold his birthright to his younger brother for a hasty meal,[2] and afterwards made no account of having parted with it, though he could not recover it. This is the case with those who sell their rightful, lawful inheritance of heaven promised them by the divine law in order that sensuality may give them food and its vain and false delights symbolized by the pottage of lentils in return. The worst evil is that they seem to set no value on celestial joys since they do not try to win them. I believe they fancy, or at least they act as though they fancied, that heaven will be offered them cheaply and that God will beg them to accept it, as though he were tired of it and had no one else to whom to give it.

The only concord between the two brothers, reason and the sensitive nature, which pleases God is such as that between Abraham and Lot. The elder brother delivered the younger from the five kings who had taken him prisoner ;[3] so must reason free the sensitive nature from the five bodily senses which take it captive. Or their concord must resemble that between the brothers S. Peter and S. Andrew, who were both disciples of Christ and died on the cross for him. So reason and the sensitive nature must both be crucified on the cross of penance that it may be said of them : ' This is true brotherhood, which followed Christ and owns as its magnificent reward the heavenly kingdom.'

Secondly the wise man speaks of the love of neighbours, typifying another form of love that must exist between the sensitive nature and the reason. Our neighbours include every relative,

[1] Gen. xxv, 23. [2] Gen. xxv. [3] Gen. xiv.

friend, fellow-citizen, compatriot, and fellow-man, and as there is nothing nearer or more closely related to the reason than the sensitive nature, since they are both born and dwell within the man, they may be called neighbours. Reason complains in the Psalm: 'My neighbours have drawn near and stood against me,'[1] meaning by neighbours the bodily senses, the dwelling and stronghold of sensuality.

God is pleased with a right love between reason and its neighbours, as the wise man declares, for there is a right or wrong spiritual as well as earthly love. The right love is that commanded by God: 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.'[2] We are not told how man must love himself: this is understood, as a love of benevolence for himself is natural to us, and such is the love we must bear for others, wishing them well in the same manner.

To return to the subject: reason has for itself a love of benevolence, and must, if it desires to please God, bear the same for the sensitive nature and all its movements. This will make it bear patiently the fleshly insults which cause it martyrdom and suffer with the same fortitude as the martyr endures the blows which are to bring him victory, for one of the saints says that chastity is a harder martyrdom in youth than the sword, for the struggle is so much longer and more dangerous. Then, my brother, love these executioners and torturers and bad neighbours of yours—these longings and fleshly temptations, however terrible they may be, as S. Stephen loved those who stoned him. Pray for them as he did for his foes, saying: 'O my Lord God, lay not this sin to their charge for they know not what they do,' being without reason, which seeks and desires thee alone![3]

These two neighbours, the sensitive nature and the reason, are symbolized by the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho and fell among robbers, who wounded him and went away leaving him half dead. A Samaritan passed by, whom our Lord calls his true neighbour, who set him on his own beast, binding up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, and brought him to an innkeeper, telling him to take care of the wounded man.[4] The latter is a figure of the sensitive nature which, leaving the peace and repose it sometimes felt, has descended from this perfection which was rendering it spiritual to Jericho, that is, to a state of inconstancy, for Jericho means the changeful moon. Not only did it descend, but it fell into the hands of the devils, who incited and

[1] Ps. xxxvii, 12.
[2] S. Mark xii, 31.
[3] Acts vii, 59.
[4] S. Luke x, 30–34.

provoked it to further evil ; filling it with bad habits and degraded dispositions as though they wounded it, they left it half dead. For the devils do not tempt a man until they see that his wrong habits suffice to rob him of the hope of returning to a safe state, so that he may incur more guilt by leading a bad life through his own choice.

The man is said to be almost dead or only half alive because the demons cannot entirely deprive him of the power of rising from sin while he is in this life. Then the Samaritan, the neighbour of the wounded man, who represents the reason, must come to his aid, for it must not fail him even in the press of the severest temptations. That the Samaritan, which means a guard, is the reason is evident, for the reason must guard the sensitive nature carefully. It is said to pass by because when the reason is absent so that it does not consent, the sensitive nature often suffers great molestations ; or it passes by when it reflects on the troubles and temptations brought on the sensitive nature, which it sets on its beast when it attributes them to the body which it accompanies during this life. The reason pours in the oil of mercy when compassionating its trials, and the wine, which makes the wounds smart, is the penances it forces it to perform. Seeing this does not suffice, for as the wise man says : ' As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent, except God gave it,'[1] reason brings the sensitive nature to the inn-keeper Christ, and offers him its intellect and will by meditation and love, promising that if he heals its ills with medicine from the apothecary's shop of his wounds, it will repay him with far greater service than it rendered him before its trial.

The third thing of which the wise man says God approves is a man and wife who agree well together. They agree well when united by marriage and very badly otherwise. Spiritually speaking, they represent the reason and sensitive nature best, for the gloss says of the first wedded couple, Adam and Eve, that the woman typified fleshly desire, which is sensuality, and the man stood for the reason, these two resembling husband and wife. They beget children, which are good works, when the sensitive part and its kingdom, that is, its members, allow themselves to be governed by and united to the reason, and they perform together some good action by the grace of God which, like marriage, makes them agree with one another. Of such agreement, Christ says : ' If two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my

[1] Wisdom viii, 21.

Father.'[1] Of such a wife the Psalm declares: 'Thy wife as a fruitful vine, on the sides of thy house.'[2] The house is the body within which dwells the sensitive nature that, when subject to and united to the reason, is a fruitful vine of whose children, good works, the Psalm adds: 'Thy children as olive plants, round about thy table.'[3] Our good actions will be round about the heavenly table, for on their account we shall be allowed to sit at the banquet promised us by Christ. They are called olive trees on account of the oil of God's mercy they bring us.

Sometimes this man and woman are united without divine grace, as though they were unmarried; then their children are grave sins of which God says: 'I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquities of the fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation.'[4] When the prophet says that the son shall not pay for his father's sin nor shall he be asked to do so, he speaks of two different persons. But God in his warning alludes to the spiritual fatherhood and sonship of which we have spoken as existing in one individual. Also, David alludes to a child who does not imitate his parent, while God threatens one who does copy his father's vices. Again, the one decree relates to eternal punishment in the next world and the second to temporal pain in this.

In order to understand our Lord's words about taking vengeance on the children, you must notice that four generations are mentioned. The first, an evil inclination or effect produced within us solely by the sensitive nature, is called the first movement first produced. The second generation is that in which this movement is partly contributed to by the reason as well as by the sensitive nature: this is also termed the first work or act secondarily produced. The third, consent, is when the reason is entirely at one with the sensitive nature in favour of the sin and is on the watch for an opportunity to commit it, or at least wishes to commit it if possible. The fourth generation is when the couple gloat over the misdeed of which they ought to repent.

Therefore God declares that he will visit with the zeal of justice the iniquities of the parents (meaning the sensitive nature and the reason) unto the *third* and *fourth* generation: he does not lay such stress upon the other two, for the first is no sin and the second is venial and easily forgiven. He makes express mention of the third and fourth because they are mortal sins for which men will be asked to pay with severe torments in the infernal

[1] S. Matt. xviii, 19.
[2] Ps. cxxvii, 3.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Exod. xx, 5.

prison. They never can make this repayment which will be required of them for ever. This is typified by the king who would take an account of his servants and commanded that one who owed him much should be sold, and his wife and children and all that he had, and he was finally put in prison and delivered to the torturers,[1] who forgive nothing, but ever ask for what can never be paid. For the soul wished to sin always, though it could not live for ever, and when it was asked to pay, its good-will could no longer avail; as the proverb says: 'He who will not when he may, when he wills, he shall have nay.'

From the two explanations of this letter, you will deduce two fundamental rules for recollection: the first is that you must always keep watch and control over the distractions of your mind; the second, that you must at once follow the warnings of your conscience and act promptly on them, at least in your heart.

[1] S. Matt. xviii, 23–34.

SECOND TREATISE

SPEAKS OF THANKSGIVING, SAYING: 'CONSTANTLY RENDER FERVENT THANKSGIVING IN ALL YOUR WORKS'[1]

CHAPTER I

AS GIFTS INCREASE, SO DOES THE RECKONING

RETURNING thanks to those who benefit us is so excellent and good a thing that if we examine carefully we shall find it implanted in almost all creatures, which, speechless as they are, render thanks to their benefactors better by deed than do men by word. We see that when the earth receives rain and sunshine from the sky, it begins to bud and send up plants and flowers to heaven to repay it. In return for the gardener's care for the trees, they, from their heights, bow down their fruit for him to pick as though to say by their action: 'Take this fruit in return for your trouble in growing us.' When the sun comes out and the little birds begin to sing and chirp, who could doubt they do it to requite him for the light and joy he has brought them, with deliverance from the cold and perils of the night? All the rivers flow swiftly to the sea to thank it for producing them; they return to the hands from which they went forth, showing their gratitude to them.

It would be tedious to recount the gratitude of many animals, which can hardly be believed. I think the reason why we doubt it is the little thankfulness we feel ourselves. This is evident from our not appreciating our blessings until we lose them, because we did not return sufficient thanks to those who gave them, so that our benefactors have to wait for recompense until we own their gift no longer, when at last we realize its value and show gratitude. It is a great evil that we should feel the loss of a thing more than its possession, when our longing for it makes us forget him who gave it us. This wrong propensity we mortals

[1] The second treatise, the Letter B, begins in the Spanish with *Benediciones muy fervientes*. . . .

hold makes us like the swine who enjoy the acorns under the oak trees, never caring or lifting their eyes to see whence their meal falls, as though it were no affair of theirs.

Let us remember, brothers, that it is important for us to know what we have received; for as S. Gregory says, as the gifts increase, so does the reckoning, and we must cast up accounts of what we receive carefully. Our best means of repayment is giving thanks. Let us begin in this way to repay to the Giver of all our goods little by little the vast sum we owe him. By one act of thanksgiving we shall effect two things: first, we shall pay our debt, and then we shall deserve greater gifts. As Cassiodorus says: 'He who has not lost what he received nor forgotten it, deserves things of higher value.' Hence there is no better way of asking for what we want than giving thanks for what has been bestowed; and there is no surer sign than gratitude that we have not lost the boon, for although we may possess God's graces within us, we do not manifest their virtue unless we render thanks for them.

God treats us as the sea treats its rivers when they return to it: he seems to think the water from the ocean of divine abundance is not lost. The waters of graces and favours do not cease to flow to us: if out of gratitude we refer them to him, they will be like the waters of which it is said: 'All the rivers run into the sea: . . . they return, to flow again.'[1] Do you hope that the water of grace God has given you may never dry up? Return it to him gratefully, and as he needs it not, he will give it back to you multiplied and blessed and will rejoice to see his gift living in you, mounting like living water to its first source. But if you keep his gifts in you, returning no thanks for them, you will be like a waste river which never enters the ocean but lingers in pools and marshes where it becomes putrid and corrupt, and breeds no fishes but foul and poisonous reptiles.[2]

[1] Eccles. i, 7.

[2] S. Teresa constantly uses the metaphor of water. She says: 'I can find no simile more appropriate than water by which to explain spiritual things, as I am very ignorant and have poor wits to help me Besides, I love this element so much that I have studied it more attentively than other things' (*Castle*, M iv, ii). She says that by tears she also means devout feelings. She often speaks of live-fire in connection with this water: 'How strange it is that water should only increase this fire, which is fierce, raging, and subject to none of the elements, so that its opposite, instead of putting it out, only adds fuel to its flames. . . . The water of genuine tears, shed during real prayer, is a gift from the King of heaven: it feeds the flames and keeps them alight while the fire helps to cool the water. Oh how delightful and wonderful a thing is

If you appropriate the gifts of God, attributing them to your own merits and rendering no thanks for them, they will perish promptly for lack of the divine approbation which is the final, supreme life of all things. They become corrupt when, instead of being the means of reaching heaven, they lead to hell and cause pride. They do not breed the fish of good works, but conceit and presumption; deadly poison for the soul. These gifts stink and are abominable in God's sight, being the pools and marshes of your malice. Act not so, brother, but rouse your soul to thank God as this letter of the Alphabet advises you: 'Render very frequent fervent Benedictions in all your works.'

CHAPTER II

A THANKSGIVING THAT GOD IMPLANTS WITHIN THE SOUL

FOR the explanation of this letter, you must know that the state of thanksgiving which God implants within the soul differs from that which it obtains by its earnest efforts. Our letter treats of this second form of thanksgiving, though I wrote with regard to the first, which God infuses into the soul and which he seems to place in that state of his own accord. If, in the short treatise on this letter, I did not discuss this higher way of rendering thanks, it was because I neither knew how, nor could I do it in a few words. Nor do I think I can say all I feel in many words. However, I will say something, leaving the rest to those who have fully experienced this condition themselves. These can say with David in his Psalm of thanksgiving for benefits received and hoped for: 'Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place.'[1] The feet of the soul are its desires with which it goes promptly and swiftly where it wills. These desires are set in a large and very spacious place when the soul is in a state of thanksgiving—more spacious, not only because its matter, and he with whom the soul has to treat, are higher, but because here it receives the liberty of the sons of God, and *much* more grace and spiritual perception than in any other state of the soul.

To understand this state—and would to God we were in it!—

this fire! When combined with the rain from heaven from whence flow the tears I spoke of, it chills and even freezes all worldly affections' (*Camino*, ch. xix). Water is also the principal symbol in the treatise on prayer in the *Life*, and the water desired by the Samaritan woman is often mentioned.

[1] Ps. xxx, 9.

you must know that when the devout aspirant, who is earnestly practising mental prayer and recollection, pursues his course without turning back or regretting that he began, our Lord is accustomed, after a long course of prayer on his part, to raise him to a state of praise that springs from the interior of his soul, which, overflowing with divine grace, breaks forth into thanksgiving that finds its vent in words. The soul longs to annihilate itself in its gratitude at seeing itself so blissfully near to God, and at the conviction of his love for it witnessed by the testimony of its peaceful conscience. The soul is oblivious of all things, and rests in what it feels; the mind thinks solely of the fount from which this grace flows; and the will, with ardent love, so delights in God that it cries, in the words of the Psalm: 'There is none among the Gods like unto thee, O Lord: and there is none according to thy works.'[1]

This thanksgiving, which is sometimes made tranquilly, sometimes with fervour, is not attained to by a man's having thought about and striven for it beforehand, for some devout persons who have never known of it or wished for it, have found and experienced it, or rather have been raised to it. By practising prayer, as I said, they reach this blessed state and remain in it so long as our Lord allows. This state of thanksgiving is so high that it seems as though all the members and bones and innermost being gave thanks to and blessed the Lord. So it was with David when he said: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all he hath done for thee.'[2] This rendering of thanks is not secret, but shows so great exterior signs of joy that such a person thinks it must be evident to all, nor would he mind, at the time, telling other devout people of it if they cared to know, according to the Psalm: 'Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things he hath done for my soul.'[3] His chief reason for speaking of his feeling to others would be to incite them to help him to thank God.

Some souls pass through this state of thanksgiving quickly, remaining in it but for a short time; then God raises them to other states. They do not know whether these are higher or lower, but understand that this giving of thanks greatly pacifies the soul. Others continue for long in this condition and strive with all their might to remain in it. However, as a rule, it is granted to no one who has not first practised prayer for a considerable period; therefore S. Paul recommends prayer before rendering thanks,

[1] Ps. lxxxv, 8. [2] Ps. cii, 1, 2. [3] Ps. lxv, 16.

saying: 'Be instant in prayer; watching in thanksgiving.'[1] Again, he writes: 'Pray without ceasing, in all things give thanks.'[2] He puts thanksgiving as the end and fruit of prayer, like Isaias: 'Joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving, and the voice of praise.'[3]

In order that there may be found in the soul thanksgiving and the voice of praise, there must first be joy and gladness in the Lord who created it, from which results the thanksgiving of that we have spoken of, which is a thing so perfect that there is some great mystery in the tradition that our Lady initiated the practice common among religious of frequently saying *Deo gratias*, which means, let us give thanks to God. She who reached this state of thanksgiving more perfectly than any of the saints, as is shown in her *Magnificat*, must have been the cause that so much praise was rendered daily to God by this repetition of *Deo gratias*, which she very often uttered. S. Augustine says: 'What better thought can we bear in our heart? What better words can our lips pronounce? What is there that we can write that surpasses *Deo gratias?* In the whole world there is no sentence shorter nor easier to hear, nor can there be anything with a higher meaning or more fertile whose very utterance bears fruit.' Also, out of reverence for our Lady who first used this exclamation and made it customary, it is often repeated in the Divine Office and prayers of the Church.

CHAPTER III

THE ORDINARY MANNER OF GIVING THANKS

You must note what this Letter says about the ordinary way of giving thanks, for if you practise it, you may be raised to the first manner of which we have spoken, which is rather bestowed than deserved. Never pass a day without thinking of the benefits God has granted you; thank and praise his lovingkindness, especially considering what you are, for you only deserve to be deprived of what you have received. Do not imagine that you possess any merit, for if you had any, it would be the gift of God. You are stripped of all good, and if you have anything, it is a borrowed robe God chose to give you. Remember faithfully the favours you have received: of nature, of fortune, of grace, and of future happiness of which you are as sure as of the rest, unless you lose it by your own fault. Scan intently the special and common graces the Lord has granted you and own truthfully that they

[1] Col. iv, 2. [2] 1 Thess. v, 16. [3] Isa. li, 3.

have come from his hand. Guard them diligently in the greatest possible purity; love them dearly, and love him much more dearly who bestowed them on you. Withdraw and watch against what could offend against grace or the Lord of grace.

Thanks may be rendered in three ways: either by your action, as S. Jerome states, when you corresponded to God with all your might for the benefit received, as the martyrs did more fully than any other saints when they gave their blood for Christ in return for his having shed his blood for them. To work for the service of God by the talent he has given us may also be called giving thanks by deeds, and to make good use of the grace he has given you is an excellent way of showing gratitude.

The second manner of thanksgiving is in your heart when, one by one, you lovingly ponder over the mercies you have received, over those promised for the future, and those lost by your own fault for which you ought to be no less grateful than for the others. On this point S. Chrysostom says that the thought and memory of benefits by the recipient guards them well, for, according to this saint, the giver ought soon to forget his gift, while he who accepts it ought always to keep in mind his obligation. If God, on his part, forgets the mercies he has shown you, it is for you to recollect them. You can tell that God does this by counting the new favours he grants you daily, which are so many that he seems oblivious of what he has done for you in the past.

The third way of thanksgiving is by speech, recounting joyfully what benefits have been bestowed on you; for if you say, 'You gave me this,' or 'This is a present from so-and-so,' you seem to be giving thanks. Speaking of this, I knew two men who while travelling together spent the night in an inn where they could not rise at midnight to praise God as was their custom. As they were of one heart and mind, for they loved one another in Jesus Christ, one said to his companion: 'This is the time for praising God; we ought not to spend it in sleep, for it is his. If you like, let us tell each other what benefits we have received from him.' The other man agreed, and one of them began to relate the good deeds he had performed since his childhood, not reckoning them as his own but as favours coming from God's hands. He said that while he was a child, the Lord granted him such grace that he gave to the poor the *blancas* (half-farthings) his mother gave him to buy fruit for his breakfast when he went to school as well as the bread, and went without breakfast himself that they might have it; the Lord had bestowed on him grace for this so long as he was a schoolboy. He was giving an account in this way of all the other

graces and virtues he could recollect, when his listener burst into so violent a fit of weeping that he stopped in alarm and asked him the reason. His friend answered: 'I can find nothing good in myself to tell when you have finished. God knows I can say nothing in my own favour in his presence. I can only remember my great sins which often prevented the graces God wished to grant me, and my soul lacks them because he saw it was not in a fit state to receive them.'

This account shows the advantage of speaking of the divine mercies; if the thought of the want of them moves the heart to such sorrow, there will be equal joy at the thought of their possession. One of these companions spoke truthfully about God's mercies to him; it was the truth, for every good deed we do is a mercy from God since he gives us the grace to perform it. His friend thought of the divine benefits he had lost, and by his sorrow deserved to receive greater gifts by which to attain to a very high state. Of this a Doctor of the Church writes: 'Alas—for those who are silent and do not speak of thee, O Lord, who art the Giver of all goods, for though they may say much, they are mute. Blessed is the tongue which renders thanks to thee, since it does that for which it was chiefly created; it begins now its work throughout eternity: that of praising its Creator.'

This third way of rendering thanks by our lips was practised by S. Augustine when he wrote on David's words, 'My mouth shall declare thy praise':[1] 'It is right that I should praise thee, O Lord, in prosperity, because thou hast consoled me; in adversity because thou chastisest me; to praise thee devoutly before I was born because thou didst form me; to praise thee since I have existed because thou didst grant me health; when I sinned, I owed thee praise for forgiving me; when I was weary for helping me; when I persevere, I owe thee praise for crowning me.' Like this saint, we ought to thank God in our joys and sorrows, like the nightingale which sings day and night. Many people sing in the happy day of prosperity and thank God joyfully: of such David says, 'He will praise thee when thou shalt do well to him,'[2] but few sing and give thanks to God in the night of adversity, and the little bird does better than they. It is said that the swan sings more sweetly at its death than ever before.

Then, brothers, let us thank God and bless him in all our works, as this Letter tells us, for if we bless him in trials and sufferings they cease to hurt us, and if we bless him for his favours, he will grant us more.

[1] Ps. l, 17. [2] Ps. xlviii, 19.

CHAPTER IV

THAT WE SHOULD GIVE THANKS IN ADVERSITIES

WE ought to find no difficulty about giving thanks in adversities, especially when we consider that it is no small favour that our Lord should allow us to help Simon of Cyrene carry his cross, and that we should suffer no trial unless he consented and approved from whom no wrong can come. He rewards and punishes us with equal love and we should thank him for both with the same love, as the Apostle bids us: 'Be ye filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord: giving thanks always for all things, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father.'[1]

S. Jerome says of these words: 'No one can keep this rule except he who knows that his life is controlled by God's providence. Although five sparrows are sold for two farthings, not one of them is caught in the net save by the will of the eternal Father.'[2] The Apostle's words that we must 'give thanks always and for all things' apply to two things: that we must thank God not only for things that we like, but also for those that try and torment us and that come to us against our will. For such trials let the soul praise God joyfully, and say with holy Job: 'Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither . . . as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord.'[3]

These praises are offered by the devout both in a general and in a special manner. They are general when we thank God for the sun which shines for us and, as it moves, gives us day and night, each with its own pleasures. The moon and stars lighten the darkness and by their courses change the seasons. We also bless God for the succession of the months that ministers to us, for the earth's fertility, for the elements which are our servants, for all the kinds of animals which carry us, help us with our work, supply us with food, cover us with their skins, set us an example or are created for us to admire. Finally, we render thanks that we were born and are still alive, and that in the world, as in the home of the powerful head of a large household, we trade and obtain what we need and know that everything on earth was made for our sake.

[1] Eph. v, 18–20. [2] S. Luke xii, 6. [3] Job i, 21.

Secondly, we give thanks in a special manner when we rejoice in the benefits bestowed on us by God individually. This is done by the heathen and the Jew, the publican and the stranger of another faith. But it is proper to the Christian and a virtue fitting to him alone to thank his Creator even for misfortunes, such as his house falling down, his wife and children being taken captive or dying from poison or being drowned, the total loss of property or weak health and countless illnesses.

Those who consider themselves very holy are accustomed to thank God, like the Machabees, for deliverance from danger,[1] but, according to the Apostle, the highest virtue is to praise our Lord in the midst of perils and miseries, ever saying: 'Blessed be God; I know that I suffer less than I deserve; these evils are light as compared with my sins; they are nothing to what my guilt demands.' 'This is the spirit of the good Christian; he, bearing his cross, follows the Saviour, nothing daunted nor discouraged by his ills. He who gives thanks to God and the Father by the Mediator between God and man refers them to Jesus Christ, since we can only come to the Father through him.' The above is quoted from S. Jerome.

This holy Doctor has written many noteworthy things, especially, as you must always remember, that a good Christian gives thanks in the midst of persecutions, and unless you do so, you have even less right to call yourself a good religious than a good Christian. Lest you should forget this or not practise it, think well over the teaching of this Letter, which is all contained in the practice of frequent and repeated thanksgiving. These thanks must not be tepid like those of invalids when they are told they must be patient and conform to the will of God who ordains all things. They answer in a lukewarm, careless way that they will, but their manner seems to say that they are very unwilling to submit. Be not so, but praise God fervently in all his works, whether pleasing to you or the reverse, giving him hearty thanks. Acquire the habit of saying, at least in your heart: 'Blessed be God in all his gifts!' and repeat these words during all your actions to render them praiseworthy and holy.

Men never resemble the angels more closely than when they thank and bless God in all things, for it is the special duty of the angels to praise him for his heavenly works, as S. John says: 'All the angels stood round about the throne . . . and they fell down before the throne upon their faces, and adored God, saying: Amen. Benediction and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving,

[1] 2 Mach. i, 1.

honour, and power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. Amen.'[1]

The angels also bless God for what he does on earth and ask men to join them as appeared at Christ's birth when they sang the canticle which the Church, following their example, chaunts at Mass: *Gloria in excelsis Deo.* They incited the shepherds to sing this canticle which is so sublime that men did not deserve to hear more than its beginning as the heavenly spirits sang it on their flight through the air. But the saints, taught by the Holy Ghost, finished this hymn as they thought fitting and as it is now chaunted at Mass. The angels also give glory to God for condemning and punishing the wicked in hell according to the words of Machabees: 'Blessed be God in all things, who hath delivered up the wicked.'[2]

The angels repeat their former praises in respect to this third order of God's actions: to show that we should render thanks to God for all he does, which means praising him in heaven, on earth, and in hell. He performs all his actions with the same will, and even with the same act and operation, and is no less to be praised for his justice than for his mercy.

It is well known that God ought to be praised for his works of glory in heaven and of grace on earth, but the unlearned doubt whether the same blessings should be rendered when he condemns the wicked for ever to the intolerable pains of hell as when he saves a soul. To remove this doubt, the good angels recall the condemnation of all the rest, praising in all things the Lord for passing sentence on sinners, for the sake of punishing them and warning those who are not yet damned.

To understand why the angels praise God as fervently when he condemns as when he saves a man, you must know that there are two chief reasons for blessing him which include all others. The first is his mercy, the second his justice. If he saves a soul, the angels praise him for his mercy; if he condemns it, they bless him for his justice. Thus, for diverse reasons, they thank him equally for all he does.

If you, brother, living on earth, wish to resemble closely the angels in heaven, you must bless the Lord for all his deeds and all your own, as our Letter bids you, fervently and often. If you examine his actions carefully, you will find that they are all mercies and benefits shown to you, and if you think that many of them do not affect you personally, enlarge your charity, and, like the holy Apostle, thank God for the favours he shows to

[1] Apoc. vii, 11, 12. [2] 1 Mach. ii, 1, 17.

others. S. Paul says, writing to a friend: 'I give thanks to my God, always making a remembrance of thee in my prayers. Hearing of thy charity and faith which thou hast in the Lord Jesus, and towards all the saints.'[1]

Not only in this epistle, but in all the rest, S. Paul rejoices and thanks God for the favours he bestows on others. If you imitate him, you will be amply repaid, for you will share with them the graces they receive, and the very thanks you render will be the best preparation for your reception of these blessings from God's bounty.

CHAPTER V

OF THE SECRET MERCIES WE RECEIVE

As I know you cannot thank God for the mercies other people receive unless you also thank him for your own, I advise you to remember from how many snares the Lord has delivered you besides the numerous traps the demon must have set of which you knew nothing, for as Job says, the devil hides his nets in the earth from which God often frees his own without their knowledge. You have fought on the field, crossed the sea, travelled in places where many a man has been killed by robbers and wild beasts; you have shared in the dangers in which many others have perished, and there was no reason why you should not have shared their fate, yet you escaped safe and sound. If you are a Christian, you should consider that God then raised you from the dead, delivering you from the jaws of death in which you had placed yourself. The case is the same as regards the sins which, knowing your weakness, God withdrew from you the opportunity, wish, and temptation of committing. Oh, what holy mercies the pitiful God and Lord Jesus Christ shows us, even when we are asleep and not thinking of him. Often while we are offending him, he plans how to deliver us from our sin and guilt which he does in ways so secret that no one can know of them; yet all Christians can believe in them and render public thanks for the unknown mercies shown them.

We do not understand how the earth helps the tree, producing from its roots fruit that grows on the topmost branches, nor can we tell how the sea provides water for the rivers. Neither is it manifest to us how we are formed before our birth or how the child can be so hidden for nine months in safety that incurs so

[1] Philem. i, 4, 5.

many dangers when it is born : if its mouth is held shut so that it cannot breathe, it dies at once and it is suffocated if it has not space for air, yet it lived compressed and enclosed in the narrowest space. No doubt God watched over it tenderly in hidden ways, and since natural things give evidence of such care, reason demands we should believe that many great and unknown benefits are conferred on our souls without which they could neither fructify, nor possess any grace, nor live for the God who created them. This is implied by our Lord when he says : ' I, like an aqueduct, came out of paradise. . . . I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth, and will behold all that sleep and will enlighten all that hope in the Lord.'[1]

This, in an allegorical sense, applies to Christ, who left the virginal womb, which is called paradise because there Christ, as man, saw God clearly, and no man on earth has done this except in the sacred paradise from which came forth our Redeemer, whose body was like a hidden aqueduct by which divine graces were secretly communicated to the world. But when this aqueduct was broken in many places, when Christ was wounded on the cross, men saw what it contained, and the centurion cried out in surprise : ' Indeed this was the Son of God ! '[2] On the aqueduct's being broken, the water of divine grace penetrated to the lowest depths of the earth, descending to the infernal regions, and ' beheld those who sleep ' in death, but only enlightened those souls in limbo that had hoped in the Lord.

If the texts quoted are applied to Christ, they have this meaning, but if they refer to the Holy Ghost they imply that by secret and hidden ways, as though underground, he bestows many gifts on us, looks on those who slumber in sin mercifully, that they may be converted, and enlightens all those who hope in the Lord, although less earnestly and vigilantly than they should.

These graces and favours that God grants us without our knowledge may be referred to by the Holy Ghost in the Canticle when he says to the bride : ' How beautiful art thou, my love, how beautiful art thou ! Thy eyes are doves' eyes, besides what is hid within.'[3] As doves' eyes are tearful, the eyes of devout persons, who are accustomed to weep, are compared to them. Such tears come from grace and virtue, especially if they are shed out of desire for our Lord's presence when he is absent ; he gives them a secret grace for this of which even they themselves are unaware ; hence the Holy Ghost speaks of what is ' hid within '

[1] Eccles. xxiv, 41, 45. [2] S. Matt. xxvii, 54.
[3] Cant. iv, 1.

and of the seeds of the pomegranate hidden within the thin rind and bark.[1]

The secret mercies bestowed by God on man were typified when the hand of Moses was miraculously cured from leprosy on his hiding it in his bosom,[2] for, in a hidden manner and in our bosom, God grants us unknown graces. Either he judges our deeds, which are infected with a thousand blemishes like leprosy, or he secretly enables us to perform actions worthy to appear before the sight of his Divine Majesty.

These hidden mercies that God bestows on man are clearly exemplified by S. Francis. It is told that while he was in prayer on Mount Alvernia, Christ appeared to him and said : ' Francis, if you possess anything, give it to me as an alms.' The Saint replied : ' Lord, what have I that I can give ? I own nothing : I left the things of this world for love of thee ; my body and soul I gave to thee ; I do not even belong to myself, nor am I my own but thine. What dost thou ask of me, Lord ? ' Our Lord replied : ' Put thy hand in thy bosom and see if thou hast aught to give me.' The Saint obeyed and found in his bosom a marvellous piece of gold which he tendered to the Lord with great joy at having found some way of serving him. Christ put out his hand and took it with great good will and again asked for alms. The holy father excused himself, pleading his great poverty and need, and that as he had nothing for himself, he could bestow nothing on others. Again the Lord bade him put his hand in his bosom and give him what he found there, and S. Francis discovered a second piece of gold, larger than the first. For the third time, Christ begged an alms, and when S. Francis again pleaded poverty he was told to put his hand in his bosom whence he drew a still larger golden piece. Three pieces of gold did the Saint find in his bosom where he thought he had nothing ; he found what he had neither put there nor had seen placed there, for besides the public favours God had granted him, he had received others so secretly that he was ignorant of them. This is the case with all God's servants, on few of whom such graces have not been bestowed. I have spoken at length on this subject, as little is written about it, and spiritual persons ought to meditate on it and examine thoroughly what they have, or may conjecture that they have, received in this way. I say conjecture, because these secret favours are too numerous to be counted.

Such hidden benefits should move us to thank the Lord with greater fervour, for not only are they many, but they show God's

[1] Cant. vi, 6. [2] Exod. iv.

great love for us, since, without our asking him, he takes such care of us. What we ask for, we in a certain manner purchase by the shame it costs to beg : if we desire we are wearied by the doubt whether we shall obtain our wish and often by the delay of waiting for it. These troubles are not undergone by those who receive secret graces that are granted unasked for and unwished, at least in most cases, so that God should be thanked for them with special gratitude.

CHAPTER VI

OF PUBLIC BENEFITS

You should thank and bless the Lord for his public mercies, for if you forget these, you can hardly praise him for the rest. The public blessings we receive, both of natural gifts such as fortune, and of grace and glory are almost countless, though many persons are so anxious to thank God that they reckon them all in order. But the words of S. Paul apply to everyone : ' What hast thou that thou hast not received ? '[1] thus giving us to understand that all that comes to us with our natural being is from God. Therefore you should thank him for whatever you see in yourself, and if you only wish to thank him fittingly for a single benefit, when you meditate on it you will find that you are bound to render hearty thanksgivings.

Not only are the gifts of grace great, but any one of the natural gifts exceeds our merits. You will realize this if you think what price you would be willing to pay for sight if you were blind : riches and power and talents would seem worthless in comparison. If your sight were wanting, you would say as the blind Tobias did to the angel who saluted him : ' What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven ? '[2] If you had to buy your eyes, what price would you give for them ? How many leagues would you travel to reach a man who could make you some ? And if you had to sell those God gave you *gratis*, what would you charge for them ? Then, brother, thank the Lord who gave you such a precious gift without payment. Though many men are born blind he chose to give you good eyes, and not content with that, preserved their sight for you daily, protecting them from a thousand dangers that injure other persons. Then think of the use of your eyes and the pleasure you enjoy from the sight of beautiful and precious things, so that you may thank God who created them and rejoice in them. Think

[1] 1 Cor. iv, 7. [2] Tob. v, 12.

how precious are the tears they shed, which are their most precious fruit, and how the sight of the poor moves you to a compassion which you would not feel were your sight wanting. Your eyes are like two brilliant torches[1] which show you the way. You ought to value them above the sun and moon, which would not enlighten but trouble you if you could not see them. As the world would be without sun and moon, so would you be without your eyes.

Besides this, think how you ought to prize your sight because God gave it you as a sign of his special care and remembrance. If the king sent you a pair of spectacles, how you would value his solicitude and how grateful you would be ! The King of kings, the eternal God, out of his particular care for you, gave you two eyes, a far more precious gift since they came from his holy hands ; render him ceaseless thanks for them. Consider how little you deserved this mercy : how he bestowed it on you before you served him : how often he renews this gift though you deserve to lose it : and how many times your eyes might have been taken from you because you have used them badly and employed them in committing sin, especially when that sin has been directly aimed against him who gave them.

If your bodily eyes lay you under such obligation to thank the Lord, how far more is it due on account of the eyes he gave your soul, which are the memory and understanding, and for the faith and hope and charity he chose to infuse within it, in which so many souls are lacking, also for the time he has given you to earn merit and to do penance which others have not had, for they long to live another hour to confess their sins but cannot obtain it. How many books and counsels and warnings and good examples has God not given you, besides your guardian angel and the Holy Ghost who moves your heart ? How many virtues did the Lord infuse in you when he drew you to himself ! He gave you the full use of your five senses. What dignity and rank and knowledge and duty and capacity has he given you ! What prudence, good will, and tenderness of heart ! He has adorned you with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, given grace to you and to others in answer to your prayers, and promised you eternal glory. Each of these gifts and others of the sort are more precious than your bodily eyes and therefore demand more gratitude. It would be tedious to relate more details, but in order that you may praise God systematically in all his works (which are also yours since they are directed to you), I will give you seven chief reasons for thanking him. I

[1] *Hachas*, a large taper with four wicks.

chose the number seven, which signifies universal and abundant, so that you may praise the Lord in all his works.

CHAPTER VII

SEVEN SPECIAL BENEFITS FOR WHICH WE OUGHT TO RENDER THANKSGIVING

THE first benefit for which both the sinner and the righteous should bless the Lord is the universal and copious redemption he wrought when he laid down his sacred life for ours, wretched as it is, and bought so vile a thing by such priceless flesh. Taking compassion on our death and captivity, he shed his precious blood to bring new birth and life to the earthly man, that he who was dead in sin might bring forth fruit of life. By the kiss of false peace he received from Judas, Christ made us friends of God; he was bound and taken captive to free Adam the thief and suicide: he submitted to false and slanderous charges against him so that he might not accept in future the true accusations the devil would present against us of our many sins. Christ's sacred face was spat upon to cleanse our soul which was blacker than coal. His precious flesh was covered with a robe, that the veil of ignorance we had incurred by sin might be lifted and our spiritual blindness cured: he was presented before the judges that we might appear fearlessly before the Judge of all men. He kept silence to make satisfaction for Eve's speech with the serpent, and that our much and evil speaking might be chastised in his divine Person. He was left naked that we might be stripped of the old man and adorn ourselves with virtuous habits in readiness for the eternal nuptials. Christ was scourged to screen us from the scourge of justice we so well deserved; mock honours were paid to him on earth to win true honour for us in heaven. He wore a crown of thorns to crown us with glory; bore a reed in his hand that we might be given the sceptre of the kingdom and was crucified between thieves to deliver us from the infernal companions with whom we had made friends and to make us companions of the holy angels.

David contemplated these works of the Redemption when, to incite himself to thanksgiving, he said to his soul: 'Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who redeemeth thy life from destruction: who crowneth thee with mercy . . . who healeth all thy diseases.'[1] These thanks and blessings for the common benefit of Redemption that are to be rendered to the Lord are typified by Zacharias,

[1] Ps. cii, 1, 4, 3.

who at the birth of S. John Baptist composed a canticle beginning : ' Blessed be the Lord God of Israel : because he hath visited and wrought the redemption of his people.'[1] John means ' graceful ' and symbolizes Christians who partake in Christ's grace : Zacharias, ' a man who remembers the Lord,' represents every contemplative who bears in mind this benefit, and that Christians were born of ' Elizabeth,' who signifies ' the Law.' As their birth rose from the Redemption, they are called ' graceful ' for they share in the grace of our Redeemer, who, full of grace, ' visited and wrought the redemption of his people.'[2]

The second boon is holy Baptism, in which you partook of the general benefit of the Passion, for we are all baptized in Christ's Passion as in the Red Sea. For this you should give special thanks to God who gave it you without any effort of your own, made an opportunity for its reception, not permitting you to die without it as many others do, and willed before you existed that there should be applied to you the water from his sacred side of which the prophet says that he saw water flowing from the right side of the temple, which is Christ, and all who received of it were healed.[3]

The blessings of Baptism were prefigured in Moses, who after having passed through the sea, finding that he was completely freed from his enemies, sang the canticle beginning : ' Let us sing to the Lord : for he is gloriously magnified, the horse and the rider he hath thrown into the sea.'[4] The name Moses means ' taken from the waters ' : he is a figure of the baptized, rendering thanks to God in a canticle of joy for having thrown into the sea of his Passion (from which Baptism is instituted) the horse and the rider, that is, sin and the devil, who were drowned therein.

The third benefit for which you must thank the Lord is for having taken you out of the world and withdrawn you from its great perils.[5] Oh, how many who wish to tread the world under

[1] S. Luke, i, 68. [2] *Ibid.* 68.
[3] Ezech. xlvii, 1, 9. [4] Exod. xv, 1.
[5] In a poem written on the religious life for a nun's profession, S. Teresa wrote :

High the reward we shall receive
Within the realm of perfect bliss
If for the treasures kept by Christ
The baubles of the world we miss,
While earth's deceptions and base dross
We for our Bridegroom's sake dismiss,
And joyful to the feast we fare,
The while religion's yoke we bear.

(Poem xviii, *Minor Works of S. Teresa.*)

foot and leave it are never able to do so ! Yet God called you and made you leave its snares and occupations ; he, as it were, withdrew you from the empire of the devil to serve him, for which you should praise him in the words of Debbora when victory was won by her : 'O you . . . that have willingly offered your lives to danger, bless the Lord. . . . It is I, it is I, that will sing to the Lord, I will sing to the Lord the God of Israel.'[1] Those who willingly offer their lives to danger are the wicked who dwell in the world and offer themselves to sin with unbridled licence ; these, when they are freed from such danger, should bless the Lord, their Deliverer. Debbora, whose name means 'subjection,' urges us to the voluntary humiliation by which we bear the yoke of the Lord and forsake the devil. It is of this subjection that she sings and praises Christ, the God of Israel.

The fourth benefit for which you must bless God is for enabling you to produce the fruit of good works : you, who were an evil tree bringing forth the fruit of sins and worthy of being cut down and cast into the fire of hell. God thought well to transport you into his garden and cultivate you, so that you may produce fruit fit for eternal life. Your soul was a waste : a soil without the water of grace ; but he supplied it so that you might not incur the curse of Israel on what was sterile. Then render thanks to the Lord for having saved you from shame and curses, and blessed you so that you may fructify. Many leave the world and live such relaxed and tepid lives in religion that they hardly seem to have ceased bearing the corrupt fruit of sins, and they are barren and unprolific in other ways. Therefore, one who produces the fruit of good observance and works should thank God fervently, like Anna, who after the birth of Samuel, composed a canticle to God for having granted her the fruit of benediction, saying : 'My heart hath rejoiced in the Lord, and my horn is exalted in my God.'[2] The name Anna means 'merciful,' or 'the soul which performs acts of mercy.' Such a soul should thank the Lord for giving it grace to conceive and bring forth Samuel, that is, 'appointed by the Lord,' as is every good purpose carried into action, which God calls acceptable, receives as his own, and animates with the seal of his grace. This purpose rejoices the heart of the devout Christian as a testimony to his conscience of the friendship of God, for men are known by their fruit and works. He considers that his virtue was fortified in order to prove that it is God who enables men to perform virtuous actions beyond their natural ability.

[1] Judges v, 1, 2. [2] 1 Kings, ii, 1.

The fifth benefit for which you ought to thank God is for enabling you to convert others, or rather, for making use of you to convert others himself. To convert sinners, the Lord has but to touch their hearts with grace, yet he wills that they should also be touched and incited by the example and words of good men. God our Lord shows such courtesy that he attributes to the just the conversion really wrought by him. He acts thus, knowing that they have done all in their power by persuasion and by begging his Majesty to move the hearts of the sinners, which he alone can do. He who prays for others, and gives them a good example and advice, does the work of converting souls and is a fisherman for the Lord's banquet : he ought to thank God heartily for giving him such an office. As a figure of this, S. Luke tells us of a man, just and fearing God, named Simeon, who lived in Jerusalem, and was waiting for the redemption of Israel ; and the Holy Ghost was in him. This Simeon composed a canticle of praise beginning : ' Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace.'[1] The name Simeon signifies ' one who listens to sorrow,' and betokens every just man, fearing God, in whom the grace of the Holy Spirit dwells. This man listens to the sorrow of the wicked who dread the torments God has ready for them unless they are converted, and this incites him to do his utmost to help them. He prays for them and hopes for their salvation and spiritual consolation and gives them a good example by fearing God. He, who is in Jerusalem, that is, the Church of God, admonishes these men. He ought to thank the Lord for allowing him to do so much and say : ' Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word in peace.' The word and promise of God is that the just should be in perfect peace. Granted that this is gained by grace and forgiveness of sins, yet there are good Christians who, when they reflect that they by their bad example and advice have withdrawn many souls from God, fear greatly at seeing that their blood cries aloud for justice. But when these good men realize that they have the work in the Church of God of converting and turning the sinners from their evil ways, they feel in perfect peace, for they are beginning to restore to God the souls of which they robbed him, and their conscience is freed from its former pain and grief.

The sixth benefit for which we should bless and thank God is the contemplation for which we are striving, in which he communicates his grace and consolation more abundantly than in any other exercise. Here he becomes and shows himself to be indeed

[1] S. Luke ii, 29.

our Friend. In many other works he becomes our Friend, but in contemplation he not only is, but shows himself to be so, and manifests the love he feels. Therefore we ought to thank him very tenderly with all our heart. This is symbolized by the Blessed Virgin, who, having climbed the hill and been told how high she stood in the divine favour, gave boundless thanks and composed a marvellous canticle of praise, beginning: 'My soul doth magnify the Lord: and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.'[1]

When the soul, in the practices of the active life, conceives God, it climbs the mountain with great haste, that is, with much fervour; it rises to what is high and sublime, incited and strengthened by him whom it has conceived, and there, in the exalted practices of contemplation, hears Elizabeth attest that it has conceived God. The name Elizabeth means 'the septenary of the Lord' and signifies the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit received in contemplation. These gifts bear testimony to our spirit of intimacy with God which is genuine and not fictitious or deceptive. When the soul hears this with its spiritual hearing, it ought to magnify the Lord with thanksgiving for having magnified it and raised it by the stairs of his grace to so high a degree. These blessings and thanksgivings rejoice the heart of God, who is the true salvation and health of the interior powers of the soul.

CHAPTER VIII

OF THE FINAL BENEFIT FOR WHICH WE OUGHT TO RETURN THANKS

THE seventh benefit for which we ought to bless the Lord is the promise of heavenly glory. If the children of Israel prided themselves on and valued highly the divine assurance that they should have the Promised Land, and thanked God heartily for it even before he gave it, how far more blessed should the Christian think himself to whom not a country, but heaven itself, is promised? This promise of the kingdom of heaven was the favourite subject of the teaching of the Son of God in this world. The first instance that occurs to me is our Redeemer's words to his own: 'Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you,'[2] if you make what is promised to you your chief aim. This seemed to Christ's disciples a hard thing which exceeded their power, for no man by his own strength and with nothing but his own merits, however great they

[1] S. Luke i, 46–7. [2] S. Matt. vi, 33

might be, could deserve so immense a boon as the kingdom of heaven. Our Lord answered these doubts by speaking to their hearts, and said to them, showing the possibility of the task: 'Fear not, little flock, for it hath pleased your Father' (together with myself and the Holy Ghost) 'to give you a kingdom.'[1] By these few words, he strongly confirmed his promise and removed the misgivings men might feel on account of their own weakness, showing that God bestows his mercies freely, and not chiefly on account of man's merits.

S. John says that the works of the righteous follow them:[2] these works will be preceded by God's most lavish mercy; the good deeds will afterwards follow them as a condition or circumstance of the beatitude of the just, not as the principle and cause of it.

For this most blessed pledge you should ceaselessly thank and bless the Lord with him who sang of this mystery: 'The mercies of the Lord I will sing for ever.[3] I will show forth thy truth with my mouth to generation and generation. For thou hast said: Mercy shall be built up for ever in the heavens.'[4] Do not be surprised at my telling you to thank God for what has not yet been given you, for the delay depends entirely on yourself; it is not his. You have not yet completed your course as he had who said: 'I am even now ready to be sacrificed: and the time of my dissolution is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'[5] He who wrote this was very near the reception of what had been promised him, and though it was not yet in his possession, he never ceased thanking God, who willed that sacrifice should be made for what was already given, besides an offering called a victim in thanksgiving for the boon which the worshipper hoped to obtain.

This manner of rendering thanks relating to the seventh benefit, and the promise above-mentioned, is general and relates to all Christians. Besides this, God's promise of his kingdom to his especial friends does not differ nor detract from the former, but gives a foretaste of what is promised. There is no added certainty

[1] S. Luke xii, 32. [2] Apoc. xiv, 13.

[3] S. Teresa was overwhelmed at the thought of her sins and the mercies God had shown her. In a letter written on November 19, 1581, to Don Pedro de Castro, canon of Avila, who had told her how highly he prized her *Life* that he had just read, she says: 'How wonderful is the divine mercy! for my ill-doings have benefited your Reverence—and well they may, since you see that I am not in hell as I have so often deserved to be. That is why I name the book, "Of the mercies of God."'

[4] Ps. lxxxviii, 1, 2, 3. [5] 2 Tim. iv, 6, 7.

in this second manner which resembles the first, with the addition of this spiritual impression. It would be wrong to say that paradise is more truly promised to one who has practised good works for fifty years than to a babe recently baptized, for the same troth is plighted in both cases : it is neither more nor less true nor can it lie. Therefore this second manner of promising only adds a foretaste of what is pledged. It is as though a man promised a jar of wine each to two friends but also gave a glass of it to the second as a sample, which no doubt would have some effect on him. The first friend would not doubt the promise if the donor was an honourable man, but the second would long more keenly for the gift.

God gives this foretaste of the paradise he promises to many of his special friends in order to withdraw them completely from the transitory joys of this life by a beginning of the joys of life eternal. This is symbolized by the children of Israel who did not receive the manna until they had no more of the flour from Egypt,[1] for if a man wishes, even while living in the desert of this life, to enjoy some slight foretaste of the bread of angels, he has to purify himself or detach himself from the very least of this world's pleasures, figured by the dust of the flour which we must reject.

David speaks of this second kind of promise to those who had obtained the first : ' O taste and see that the Lord is sweet : blessed is the man that hopeth in him. Fear the Lord, all ye his saints : for there is no want to them that fear him. The rich have wanted, and have suffered hunger : but they that seek the Lord shall not be deprived of any good.'[2] These words have a deep meaning and are much to the point. I will not comment on them now, as I can do so more appropriately later on, because, as David says : ' Blessed is the man that hopeth in the Lord ' after having tasted him.

I will quote a simile which shows what blessings and graces God grants to such people. The prophet Daniel says that when the three men were in the midst of the fiery furnace by order of King Nabuchodonosor, an angel went down and drove the flame of the fire out of the furnace and made the midst of it like the blowing of a wind bringing dew, so that not a hair of their head was singed nor did the heat trouble them nor do them any harm. Then these three men with one voice praised and glorified and blessed God in the midst of the furnace, where, inspired by the Holy Ghost, they composed a canticle of thanksgiving, beginning :

[1] Exod. xvi. [2] Ps. xxxiii, 9–11.

'Blessed is the holy name of thy glory: and worthy to be praised, and exalted above all in all ages. Blessed art thou in the holy temple of thy glory: and exceedingly to be praised, and exceeding glorious for ever. Blessed art thou on the throne of thy kingdom, and exceedingly to be praised, and exalted above all for ever. Blessed art thou, that beholdest the depths, and sittest upon the cherubims: and worthy to be praised and exalted above all for ever. Blessed art thou in the firmament of heaven: and worthy of praise, and glorious for ever.'[1]

The rest of this canticle is sung daily by the Church of God at Lauds in his praise, forming a very devout psalm to bless him in all his works and incite all creatures to thank him so far as lies in their power. This applies to the second promise of which we speak, for the three men put in the midst of the furnace which the proud king orders shall be lit are a figure of the three concupiscences of our soul set in the malignant fire of our evil sensual power which the devil, monarch of the proud, sets burning in our body and flesh. This fire of evil concupiscence, according to the wise man, never says: 'It is enough.'[2] Of this fire it is written: 'I will make a fire in the midst of thee which shall consume thee.'

Our three powers are in the midst of the fire of evil concupiscence because they are subject to our bodily passions and dwell in the land of enemies. That these three men signify the three powers is shown by their names: Sidrach, Misach, Abdenago, servants of God. The first name signifies 'a beautiful field,' and is the upright will which scorns and abominates sin. In this field God alone must be sown to be brought forth in our soul. Misach is 'that which keeps the waters from being dispersed' and is our memory when, withholding fancies and imaginations, it applies itself to God and seeks to recollect nothing but him. Abdenago, 'servant of light,' is our understanding when enlightened by God. The three powers of our soul being in this evil fire, though they may be set there against their will, shall not be burnt nor pained; rather, Christ, the Angel of good counsel, will be sent there to give them to drink of the dew of celestial grace which will cool them, and the wind of the Holy Ghost will extinguish in the midst of the furnace (the heart of man) the fire of wrongful concupiscence so that it may in no way harm those who taste of the heavenly dew and manna. Then, the three powers of our soul, being thus favoured, with one voice and one accord, solely bent on this, together sing thanks and praise to God like the three men in the furnace.

[1] Dan. iii. [2] Prov. xxx, 16.

It should be noticed that the first verse contains the general promise made to all Christians and begins by blessing the God of our fathers, the Apostles who received the promise for us, and the following verses render thanks and bless the Lord for the glory of heaven which he had allowed the three men to taste. In conclusion, you must bear in mind that this Letter admonishes us to bless God fervently in all we do and in all that happens to us, attributing everything to him with the greatest possible love.

Not only as regards ourselves, but concerning others also we should bless God for all we hear of them. If you are told that so-and-so is well, you should say : ' Thank the Lord who cares for him.' If you are told there is a great war in some country, you should answer : ' Blessed be God who frees us from it ! ' On hearing that someone is ill, answer : ' Thank God for giving him a chance of earning merit if he is patient ! ' On being told of his recovery, reply : ' Blessed be God for giving him health with which to serve him.' When you learn of the trials of other people, say : ' Thank God, who is taking this means to make them think of the joys of heaven which are unmixed with sorrow.' When you are told that a person is an eloquent preacher, say : ' Blessed be Jesus Christ who gives his graces as he will.' On hearing that a grave sin has been committed, reply : ' Blessed be God for his mercy in upholding us from doing the same.' When you hear that someone has found fault with you, answer : ' Blessed be God, whose judgement differs from man's.'

I can think of nothing in the world for which, if you examine it, you cannot find cause to render thanks to God. This is the office of the angels who glorify and bless him in all things as their principle, attributing them all either to his justice or his mercy and rendering him infinite praise. It would suffice to make you love this practice if you considered how God is served by being thanked for all things and that the continual remembrance of it benefits your soul immensely. To answer people in such a manner edifies them, prevents your speaking idle words, and makes you utter many useful, devout, truthful sayings which savour more of heaven than of this world and cannot fail to bring you a rich reward.

THIRD TREATISE

HOW THE SOUL MUST COMPORT ITSELF TOWARDS GOD, SAYING: 'BLIND AND DEAF AND MUTE MUST THOU BE, AND EVER MEEK'[1]

CHAPTER I

MEN LEARN MOST BY THE NEGATIVE WAY

THIS Letter closely resembles that in the *Second Alphabet*, though the explanation as required by the *Third Alphabet* will be very different. In the former Letter we directed that the bodily and exterior senses being closed, we should open those of the soul and instruct them carefully, so that as we know material things through our corporal senses, so, by exercising the interior senses of the soul, we might come to know what is spiritual and sublime. But as our intellect, as regards divine things, is like the bat or owl blinded by the sunshine, unable to look at it because their eyes are weak, we must hide ourselves like them of whom the Psalmist says: 'I am like a night-raven in the house'[2] of this world, for in the next our sight will be strengthened more than the eagles' by the Lamb, so that we can gaze on God without blinking or intermission for a moment.

To make this clearer it must be remarked that the light of our eyes alone does not suffice to perceive material objects, for we cannot see them at night or in the dark, though our eyes are open. For sight two lights are required: that from without and that within our eyes must combine. So it is as regards spiritual things; in order to perceive them, the natural light which is impressed in our soul must combine with divine and heavenly light, so that we can say with David: 'In thy light we shall see light.'[3] Faith is the light to lighten the Gentiles and is fused with that of our soul through the consent and devout affection with which we

[1] C, the third Letter, is given in the Spanish as: *Ciego y sordo y mudo deves ser y manso siempre.*

[2] Ps. ci, 7.

[3] Ps. xxxv, 10.

receive it. By this combination we see by faith the celestial truths to which our soul is naturally inclined, as it always desires better things.

Those who are satisfied with this and with the enlightenment of faith, and wish to perfect this knowledge, should follow the directions of this Letter in the *Second Alphabet*, which, as I said, closely resembles those of the *Third*. Those who make the most practical use of their reflection upon divine matters, strengthen their faith by the fresh light on truths which they find in meditation and devout considerations both of the Holy Scriptures, of creatures and of man's discoveries. Such people gain much benefit from their natural light and the interior senses of the soul. They open the eyes of their heart; that is, they reflect upon what they have noticed and learnt, and by sifting and bringing to mind the relation between the Mysteries, and by speaking, that is, arguing in their own minds, deducing and inferring one matter from the other, they learn much by their comparisons and examinations.

Others do not follow this course. Knowing how little light of their own they possess, how disproportionate it is to that which God holds, and that their want of light limits their knowledge, they cease to rely on themselves, knowing that he who searches into the Majesty of God is overwhelmed by its glory and that the greatness of the Mysteries overwhelm the mind and deprive it of its strength. Of this we see an example in the Apocalypse when S. John, speaking of his vision of Christ says: 'His face was as the sun shining in its power. And when I had seen him, I fell at his feet as dead.'[1]

To understand why S. John fell as dead we must know that according to philosophy, a thing which affects the senses, when very excessive, injures them. For example, a very loud sound deafens the ear and injures its sense of hearing; if we stare at the sun, it will blind us by harming our sense of sight, or if we touch a red-hot iron it will hurt our sense of touch.

In a like manner there are some revelations and sublime intuitions infused by God in the souls of the saints which, so far as their nature allows, injure the mind. But as it cannot be destroyed by them, they leave it stupefied and overcome, and for the time incapable of working. S. John says that on looking on Christ's face, which shone like the sun, he fell on his face as dead, because the paltry human mind has not even strength to contemplate the least things of God. As the sun blinds our eyes, so, if during this earthly exile we investigate divine matters too curiously, we

[1] Apoc. i, 16, 17.

destroy the sight of the eyes of our soul, like the gnat which burns itself by flying to the candle to see what the light is.

Those who have striven to investigate divine matters know this. Their head feels dazed and empty and powerless, as though, if they worked it a little longer, they would go mad. Sometimes people suffer great injury in this way. To avoid this and afford men an easier mode of reaching God, our Letter directs : ' Blind and deaf and dumb must thou be, and ever meek.' As we said, such a one must blind himself like Moses who, when he had climbed the mountain that he might the better speak to God, hid in the darkness, whence, though he did not see God, he conversed with him. So our Lord says to the devout soul in the Canticles : ' Turn thine eyes away from me, for they have made me flee away.'[1] This often happens. God gives a man some grace, and the soul, through its extreme desire to understand, reason about, and examine it, and know what it is, loses the favour, of which God deprives it. God wishes that with the arms and wings of our soul we should embrace him and what he gives us, and should be so delighted with its possession as to feel no curiosity about it. That is why this Letter bids us become blind, for the sightless man holds fast what his hands contain without knowing what it is and takes more pleasure in touching than in speculating on it. One gloss on this text states that our Lord means to say to the devout contemplative : ' Withdraw the feeble contemplation of thy soul from my Majesty, for thou canst not know me.' Another explains that it implies : ' Do not cease to desire to know me, but do not presume to think thou canst know me.'

This interpretation agrees with our Letter, which does not bid us become blind that we may not know, but that we may know more and better. People wear spectacles, not in order to see, but to see more clearly, and so it is with this blindness. Isaac prophesied more of his son Jacob after losing his sight than he would have done if he had kept it,[2] so that his blindness enabled him to understand greater mysteries, for when he was shocked at what he had done through his blindness, it was revealed to him that it had been done by the will of God, though Isaac had not himself willed it, so that the mistake was sanctioned.

Happy would he be who lacked eyes, but God saw for him ; or who had no feet, but God walked for him, as we read in the book of holy Job : ' I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame.'[3] To those who blind themselves to see God, God himself is eyesight, and he leads them lest they go astray : indeed, they journey

[1] Cant. vi, 4. [2] Gen. xxvii. [3] Job xxix, 15.

better, for he guides them in paths by which they could not go if they could see, as he says by Isaias : ' I will lead the blind into the way which they know not : and in the paths which they were ignorant of I will make them walk : I will make darkness light before them.'[1] The way which is most strange and alien from mortal knowledge is the negative way spoken of in this Alphabet ; and it has by-paths and side-ways ; secret experiences as unknown to souls as the highway. These preliminary directions are very obscure for beginners, but if they make themselves blind, trusting to him who guides them, he will lead them as he promises in this prophecy.

So did the Lord raise S. Paul in his blindness to the third heaven, that is, according to S. Augustine, to the third hierarchy, that, like the angels who dwell there, he might contemplate God. I say that S. Paul suffered bodily blindness because, according to the same Doctor of the Church, when S. Paul saw nothing because he was blind, he saw God.[2] And not only was he physically blind, which does not concern us here, but he was also spiritually blind in the way of which we have been speaking, for he says that he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. I also maintain that his soul was then blind because it was suspended in such a manner that the inferior powers, that is, the exterior and interior senses as well as the reason, could not carry on their operations. These for the time ceased from their acts and works, being entirely suppressed during S. Paul's rapture, in such a manner that his soul then possessed none of its former operations nor of those proper to a soul when united to its body, in order that no living man who exercised vital operations might see God.[3] This is the gloss of S. Augustine on the words : ' Man shall not see me and live.'[4]

CHAPTER II

THAT DURING THIS LIFE WE CANNOT KNOW GOD IN HIMSELF

He who reaches the heights of contemplation, where he rather sustains than acts and is moved rather than moves himself, does not make use of the knowledge and experience which were as the eyes that enlightened his soul, for sublime contemplation relates to the Divinity, which cannot be known through our corporal

[1] Isa. xlii, 16. [2] Acts ix, 8.

[3] This agrees with S. Teresa's descriptions of rapture in the *Castle*, M. vi, the *Life*, ch. xx, and elsewhere.

[4] Exod. xxxiii, 20.

senses, nor even by the spiritual senses of the soul while it is united to this mortal body, because the soul is then unable to obtain knowledge of anything which has not first existed in the bodily senses. Our Lord God being pure Spirit, it follows that he cannot be known by the spiritual senses of a soul which is still imprisoned in the dungeon of this mortal flesh, for it is by the intervention of the body that it is constrained to imbibe all that it learns through the transmission which takes place between the flesh and the spirit.

The unfortunate soul while joined to the body cannot operate so freely as though it were at liberty. This is figured in Elias, who after reaching the summit of the mount of the Lord, covered his face with his mantle that he might not see God who descended over the mountain to console him.[1] The holy prophet, well knowing that he could not behold the invisible Lord with his bodily eyes, blinded himself by covering them with a mantle, to show that the knowledge and light he then possessed reached no further than the mantle, which is the Humanity of God. Christ our Redeemer says of this : ' The keepers that go about the city found me : they struck and wounded me : the keepers of the walls took away my mantle from me.'[2] The keepers of the city found our Lord when he chose to manifest himself to the guards of Jerusalem, the priests who kept custody over it. They struck at his good name ; they wounded his precious body ; they took away his mantle, that is, his body, when they slew him on the cross. This is the mantle which Christ washed in blood, as Jacob had prophesied.

So that, to return to our subject, the sight of Elias was limited by the mantle that covered his eyes ; he was blind as regards the Lord who passed before him, and thus blinded, held communication with him. We read of much the same thing regarding Moses, who begged God to show him his face ; the Lord, when about to grant the favour and pass before him, covered the eyes of Moses with his right hand.[3]

Although this rudiment of a knowledge of God exists in our soul, we know that it was slain and buried by sin when the eyes of our first parents were opened and they lost this holy blindness that they possessed before the fall in a degree too high to be expressed in words.[4] In its place, there succeeded for men what

[1] 3 Kings xix.

[2] Cant. v, 7. The Spanish gives *manto*, mantle, instead of ' veil,' as in the Douai version.

[3] Exod. xxxiv.

[4] Gen. iii.

Ecclesiastes calls 'the painful occupation of searching out all things that are done under the sun.'[1] It is called painful, not because it is evil in itself, but because it often impedes prayer and contemplation of sublime and spiritual subjects concerning God. The pure desire for this has become so remiss and lifeless in our soul that our Lord must breathe upon it with his grace to reanimate the hidden spark within our heart; for except by his special favour, we can do no more than recognize our blindness.

The generative power of all plants and seeds comes from the sun, which is their natural father. But they cannot exercise this power unless the sun again shines on them, arousing and calling them into action by its heat. So, though by nature we have a certain ability for contemplating the Divinity of our Lord God, it is necessary that we should be influenced and vivified anew by that same Sun of Justice, as the egg receives life from the warmth of the dove, which typifies the grace of the Holy Spirit. If we wish to enjoy this grace in a supreme degree, it will be well for us to blind ourselves to all that is not God.

God ordained that none but those who were appointed might see the things that were in the sanctuary under pain of death.[2] This law was kept with great rigour as regards the Bethsamites who looked on the ark. It would have been better for them if they had been blind, for they died in consequence of their sight. God pronounced such a severe penalty to condemn the error of those who maintain that we can understand the Divine Essence and behold it uncovered during this mortal life without the medium of the mirror of his creatures in which he is reflected. God grant there may be no one who dares to say so in these days! Let ignorant devotees moderate their way of speaking, for when they receive a little light or some trifling revelations to which they give more credit than is due, they talk much more about it than they should. This is done not to instruct others, but to win admiration for themselves. They speak very inaccurately about their contemplation; if they do not know how to describe it, let them be silent, for they do not know the terms for spiritual matters. Let them behave as though they were spiritually blind, and give no signs of what has passed, but enjoy these many favours of which they say nothing. It is one gift that God should bestow them and another that one should have the power to describe them.[3] Let him who only receives the first gift be silent and

[1] Eccles. i, 13. [2] Lev. iv, 20.

[3] S. Teresa scored this sentence in her copy of the book, also the words in paragraph 3 of the next chapter: 'It is one thing for God to

rejoice in what he has, and he who possesses both should be very cautious about what he says, for an impulse which does not always come from a good spirit may move him to say what, on after consideration, he will bitterly regret. It is better that in such a case he should be sorry for having said nothing than for having said too much, for the former case can be remedied, the latter cannot.

CHAPTER III

HOW WE MUST BE DEAF AND DUMB

THE following explanation of this Letter advises you to be spiritually deaf, for God declares that it was through listening to his wife that the first man met with much harm. Our wife is our sensuality which we must by no means listen to nor debate with. This is not opposed to Abraham's having been bidden to hear the voice of Sara, who was in her old age[1] (as is our sensuality when well under the control of the reason). Then it bids us dismiss the bondwoman and her son, ridding ourselves of the imaginations and distractions which proceed from the sensitive nature, the noises which stupefy our soul, like the ceaseless grinding of a mill. This should not be when the house of God is being built, for no sound of hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron should be heard,[2] for such noises are harsh and annoy rather than pacify the soul.

The third word bids us be silent interiorly, saying nothing, not even ' speaking lofty things ' as Samuel's mother counselled,[3] for the Lord is the God of knowledge and prefers that men should pray to him dumbly and in spirit and in truth, rather than by speech. In fact, the more silently we beseech him, the more favourably does he listen and answer, as in the case of Moses. The latter said nothing, but prayed mutely, yet the Lord answered as though he had been importuned : ' Why criest thou to me ? ' That God grants the prayers of those who are silent about their longings in his presence is shown in the case of Zachary, who while he was dumb begot S. John (whose name means ' grace '), and did not utter a word until the child was born, though after-

bestow a grace and another to enable us to understand it ; he confers the first gift on many, but without the second grace of understanding it, however much the soul may long for it.' She writes : ' It is one grace that our Lord gives grace ; and it is another grace to understand what grace and what gift it is ; and it is another and further grace to have the power to describe and explain it to others ' (*Life*, ch. xvii, 7).

[1] Gen. xxi. [2] 4 Kings vi, 7. [3] 1 Kings ii, 3.

wards he spoke better than ever before, having become a great prophet.[1]

If we wish, by the help of God, to engender his grace in our souls, and to know how to speak magnificently on heavenly subjects, we must first, as Gerson says, be mute even in our heart, as Jeremias declares: 'The Lord is good to them that hope in him'; which he explains as: 'It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God.'[2] To show that this state must continue, the prophet adds: 'It is good for a man, when he hath borne the yoke from his youth. He shall sit solitary and hold his peace: because he hath taken it upon himself.'[3]

All these texts warn us that our heart should be mute and that we should keep it in perpetual silence if we wish to rise to sublime contemplation. The gloss says: 'Wait with silence.' This prophet had so progressed that, setting aside all the things of this world, he passed beyond the choir of angels to find him whom he loved; whom he declares is to be waited for as the highest good and for the sake of union with whom it is well to have borne the yoke from one's youth, and this yoke is to be solitary and sit in silence. Thus far the gloss.

You must also know that the world is by nature deaf, which must be understood to mean in this case that the soul which is mute, not meditating on any subject, should also be deaf regarding thoughts which drag it down, and repress the senses with their many distractions. Therefore it is well that under this Letter should be included the two words dumb and deaf, for the one forbids the wandering thoughts we purposely encourage, and the other prevents those that would arise from our many occupations and levity.

On this subject S. Bonaventure says in his commentary on the *Mystical Theology* of S. Dionysius: 'As this perception is of higher things and not of those of the earth, we are told to disregard not only the action of the exterior but of the interior senses as well. The experimental knowledge of this comes from God, who declares by Ezechiel that he has given the recollected soul rings in its ears, that it may be deaf to learned reasonings and has stopped its lips that it may not speak of them.

These three words, blind, deaf, and dumb, can also be referred to the three powers of the soul, directing that the intelligence should be blind in the manner we have described and not make use of its knowledge, which might destroy this suspension, and that the will should be deaf to the love to which creatures invite

[1] S. Luke ii. [2] Lam. iii, 25, 26. [3] *Ibid.* 28.

it. Of these two things S. Bonaventure says: 'The soul should first forsake the consideration of and affection for visible things and the contemplation of what is perceived by the senses, and should let pure love take precedence. Let the memory keep silence, not recalling any matters on which it could be employed. Thus Jesus enters the soul, though not in a fleshly manner but according to the spirit, while the three doors are closed as, after the resurrection, he entered the supper room of which the doors were shut. This is a figure of the soul into which God comes to sup if only the door of consent is open to him.'

By this, I do not mean that the essence of the soul is perfected by grace before its powers, for according to the most reliable opinion the essence is perfected by the powers and the powers are perfected by means of their acts and operations, although the first opinion is not improbable. What I mean is that God enters the soul better when it is closed to all but him, to whom it renders itself wholly with a fervent longing that is taught by no knowledge gained from any creatures, for it is above them all.

CHAPTER IV

OF MEEKNESS

As the former subject is enlarged upon more fully later on, setting it aside let us speak of the last word, which bids us be meek. According to those who write on this virtue, the meek live in a noble quietude of mind, and are not easily perturbed. They are sober and temperate, control their anger, are not impetuous but very placid; they are gentle and never speak bitterly; courteous and not rough-mannered. They are good-hearted, not malicious, suspect no harm, always return good for evil, are healthy and uncorrupted, for those who are by nature meek are naturally healthy, not only in soul but even in body. They are neither provoked nor do they provoke others to evil; they do not hinder people nor are they hindered: they bear no grudges and are generally self-possessed: are not readily annoyed and usually give place to evil. They overlook many offences; are easily corrected; do not resist though they are struck and wounded; are not cruel nor melancholy but always cheerful[1]; they are extremely docile and sincere, simple and thoroughly straightforward: their face is open and they are full of kindness and patience. They have a

[1] S. Teresa had a great love of cheerfulness. 'God deliver me from sour-faced saints!' she often used to exclaim.

noble character, generous and free. Finally, they seem more truly men than those who are not meek, for, according to the wise man, by nature man is a meek animal, as is seen by his face, for furious men look like wild animals without the mercy or the character of mankind. Happy and blessed indeed are the meek, for they possess in the earth of their body a subject and not a rebel, highly tractable and reined in by reason, ready to go whereever it is bidden.

The souls of the meek being wholly subject to God, their bodies are subject to them and are by them yielded to God. The body obeys the soul which obeys God and opposes the soul which opposes him. To a meek soul, the body is meek and against the soul which breaks the yoke of the Lord in anger, the body rebels. Therefore ' Blessed are the meek,' for they being possessed by God will be entitled to possess themselves as well as the land of the living, which is heaven ; for, according to S. Augustine, no one will possess God in heaven unless God possessed him on earth. The meek also really possess earthly things, for when they lose them they do not lose meekness ; but they drag this world's goods after them as their slaves, but when they lose them, calmly bid them go in peace, showing that they were detached from such property.

Blessed are the meek, for God bids them specially to seek him as a sign that he is ready to give himself to them, for as ' birds of a feather flock together,' Jesus Christ, the meek Lamb,[1] who for us was led to sacrifice, loves to be with the meek. Blessed are the meek, for they will own the thrones of the proud devils on which they will peacefully seat themselves, for it is written : ' God hath overturned the thrones of proud princes, and hath set up the meek in their stead.'[2] Blessed are the meek, for they are true disciples[3] of Christ who, meeker than Isaac, laid himself upon the cross to be wounded. He reserved meekness for himself and called himself its Teacher, bidding us go to his school, which is the cross, to learn it.

Blessed are the meek, for they are barricaded from the shots of the devil's artillery and the persecutions of this world by sacks of wool. They are like glass vessels packed in hay or straw to preserve them from jars. Meekness is the strong shield by which the arrows of wrath are broken or turned aside. The meek are clothed in very soft cotton which defends them perfectly without offence to anyone.

Blessed are the meek, the lodestones that by nature attract iron

[1] S. Matt. xxi, 5. [2] Ecclus. x, 17. [3] S. Matt. xi, 29.

to them. Nothing can so soften hard hearts as meekness, as we see in the meek David, who often mollified the heart of his great enemy Saul and even made him weep and become merciful.

Blessed are the meek, for the Lord will always listen to them; they know that he will hear their prayers, for it is written: 'The prayer of the humble and the meek hath always pleased thee.'[1] Blessed are the meek, for God is their Defender and Avenger when they are injured, as is shown by Moses.[2] When Aaron and his sister Miriam spoke against him, God was very angry, though their words were not seriously abusive, because Holy Scripture tells us Moses was the meekest man on earth; therefore he received more grace and was higher in God's favour than any man of his time; for the Lord declared that his grace and sanctity compared with that of others was as truth compared with a dream, or as a body to its shadow.

Now, brother, that you understand the worth of meekness, I have only to beg you to pray for it and endeavour to gain it, for it is the hostess of prayer, as S. James the Apostle says.[3] They are firm friends and companions; the one increases with the other: if one fails, the other does; they are hardly ever parted. They are like the well-beloved Martha and Mary, who both received our Lord into their house and helped one another to serve him.

The reason that I have said more about meekness than of any other virtue is because it is the most helpful of any natural quality in the spiritual exercise of which the *Third Alphabet* treats. If you do not possess it, you must seek it before anything else, for it is the greatest preservative of divine grace. It often happens that those who are drawing near to God and who feel his grace in their heart, lose it on feeling the slightest anger. They do not know how grace came nor where it has gone. Harsh words have the same effect on the speaker: they disturb the heart and spill the liquor of grace it held.

I know this and warn you of it: God grant you may realize it and that you may not be like those persons who, after having spoken angrily, say that they are not sorry and their conscience does not reproach them, for they had a good intention. If they merely tell me that they do not regret it, I believe them, for I do not consider that they are servants of God; but when they aver that they did not err, I do not believe it, for we know almost palpably that a slight movement of wrath or a few irritable words uttered by a devout person produce the effects described. Hence our Father S. Francis says that anger and annoyance hinder charity.

[1] Judith ix, 16. [2] Exod. ii. [3] S. James i, 21.

Apart from what I have said, it is evident that meekness corrects both our own and other people's faults more effectively than wrath, as the Psalm says : ' For mildness is come upon us : and we shall be corrected.'[1] Never is man more fit to judge and reprehend than when he is meek, for he sees the truth clearly regarding himself and others. Those who are prudent, when they know they have lost this virtue, wait for its return and cease to punish meanwhile lest God should punish them ; in this they resemble him of whom it is said that he judges with tranquillity.[2]

Others, still more prudent, when they are angry forgive their adversaries in order to overcome themselves, knowing that they sin more deeply by their ire than their foes do by offending them, for they themselves offend against God and the rest offend against man.

Some persons are rash enough to say that punishment cannot be rightly dealt except in anger. They quote the words of the prophet : ' My indignation itself hath helped me,'[3] and the Psalm : ' Be ye angry and sin not.'[4]

To confute this let them listen to the counsel given by the sage : ' Do thy works in meekness, and thou shalt be beloved above the glory of men.'[5] He tells us to finish our works in meekness, because he knows where the danger comes in, for many begin with meekness and gradually grow angry. He tells us that then we shall be beloved above the glory of men, for the meek are angels rather than men.

To those who contradict this, I answer that anger is never good, for natural wrath is painful to him who feels it and causes the loss of the grace of which I have spoken which the Lord vouchsafes to those who please him. Anger which is venial will have a temporal penalty, and doubtless, when mortal, will be punished eternally.

The indignation and wrath of which the prophet and the Psalm speak mean zeal, which helps men of weak character to execute justice. The second text : ' Be ye angry and sin not,' stands for, ' Be zealous, but with discernment : let your zeal keep within the bounds of reason.' I beg those in authority to remember S. Jerome's words : ' Nothing is worse than a furious, domineering person in authority. He, who by rights should be mild to all,

[1] Ps. lxxxix, 10.

[2] Wisdom xii, 18. ' No superior should give a correction while angry, but should wait until she feels calm, when her reproof may be beneficial ' (Maxim 59).

[3] Isa. lxiii, 5. [4] Ps. iv, 5. [5] Ecclus. iii, 19.

shouts, frowns, his lips tremble, his brows are knitted, he is insolent, his face is distorted, he is quarrelsome and clamorous, and not only deters the erring from the right path, but by his cruelty plunges them into an abyss of vices.' These are the words of that Saint; how true they are is better recognized by their subjects than by those in authority.

To return to our theme. The devout should be meek-hearted in order to acquire holy fear and patience; and meek in order to pacify the wrath of their associates, answering them, as the wise man counsels, 'peaceable words with mildness.'[1] They should be meek in their actions to gain the love of all and an increase of grace, as it is written: 'My mildness hath multiplied me.'[2]

Therefore, brother, I beg you with the Apostle, By the mildness . . . of Christ[3] to be meek, for Jesus was sent to announce salvation to the meek; receive his inspiration meekly, that you may rejoice; never forsake meekness if you do not wish to be forsaken; bind it ever to you that you may be always ready to receive his grace. Be meek, if you wish to preserve your soul and be armed with the weapons of our Redeemer. Live worthily with all meekness and humility and patience, bearing with others in charity, being 'careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.'[4]

[1] Ecclus. iv, 8. 'Always accede to your sisters' requests, unless contrary to obedience; answer them humbly and gently' (Maxim 49).
[2] 2 Kings xxxii, 36. The Douai version gives 'My mildness.'
[3] 2 Cor. x, 1. [4] Eph. iv, 3.

FOURTH TREATISE

SPEAKS OF THE CUSTODY OF THE HEART, SAYING: 'DETACH THY HEART AND EMPTY IT OF ALL CREATED THINGS'[1]

CHAPTER I

FALSE AND DOUBLE-HEARTED PEOPLE AND RELIGIONS

AS this Letter concerns the heart, clearly it does not apply to those who have none. It is not addressed to those who have nothing spiritual about them and who live as though they possessed neither heart nor soul, to whom God says: 'Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord. For he shall be like tamaric in the desert, and he shall not see when good shall come: but he shall dwell in dryness in the desert, in a salt land and not inhabited.'[2] 'He who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm' is he who cares only for what affects his body, forgetting his soul. On him the curse descends: 'Go, ye cursed of my Father,' for you showed no mercy except to your body, remembering only the visible man and not your invisible spirit. The heart of such persons withdraws from God to seek their own interests and wishes. As God is the way, the truth, and the life, they can but wander from the right path and fall down the precipice of hell; without the truth they will be misled and deceived by the devil, and without the life, will come under death's dominion.

Such is the fate of the heart that departs from God, which is foretold in the text, for it is fit for nothing but to be burnt, being useless, without fruit, and bitter. When the time comes for entering heaven, it will never see glory, being incorporated with what it loves and its eyes covered and blinded by material things. It dwells in the desert, for it has withdrawn from the divine protection; it is planted and has given forth roots in aridity; no

[1] The Letter D begins in the Spanish with *Desembaraza el corazon*. . .

[2] Jer. xvii, 5.

tear is ever shed by it, and dry as it is, the salt desert in which it dwells increases its thirst. Those who live in the region deserted by God, that is, vices and sins, never say 'enough,' nor cease to offend him. Yet in that region the soul feels perpetual hunger and the evil longings of the human heart are never satisfied, for no angular vessel can be filled with a round substance, and man's heart, triangular after the model of the Blessed Trinity, cannot be filled with the vices, which are round, since they roll down to hell. Until the Father occupies the angle of our memory, the Son that of our intellect, and the Holy Ghost that of our will, our heart will not be in an inhabited country.

Hence the heart of the wise man is said to be in his right hand and the heart of the fool in his left.[1] Elsewhere God is declared to stand at the right hand of the poor,[2] which means, no doubt, in the heart he enriches with his grace, which the heart on the left side, in the midst of vanities and follies, could not receive. Therefore this Letter is not addressed to such men nor to the double-hearted, for it is as bad to possess two hearts as to have none.

When two things obstruct one another, it is better to lose one, as in the case of a child who is cutting his second teeth when the first are not extracted, or of the stock of a tree left unpruned: the more shoots it bears, the less they are worth. If we had two tongues, one would impede the other and prevent our speaking. So double-heartedness is a hindrance; between the two they accomplish nothing, like two managers of a business, who do less than one.

The same thing happens with worldly religious. They keep up some of the outward appearance of religious in their observances yet show much of the secular in their esteem for honour and rank, learning and high office. Being in religion, in spite of themselves, they must live consistently, for they are bound to follow their rule, but they gladly set their heart on the world as their actions show. So the one thing obstructs the other, for they are not really either friars or seculars. It would be better for them to be single-hearted, for then they could act rightly in whichever state they were, while now they are not what they ought to be where they are, nor are they where they want to be.

If a man with two heads wished to be baptized, it would have to be ascertained whether he had two wills. If so, he must have two souls, and each head must be baptized separately under a

[1] Eccles. x, 2. [2] Ps. cviii, 31.

different name. If the one will were perverse and wicked, it would be damned, and if the other were good, it would be saved. God would have one half of the body and the devil the other. I can only judge in the same way of the double-hearted whom we ought to call by the two names : friar secular—friar first, as they wear the religious habit, but when we know their conduct, we baptize them again with the second name. It is not for me to speak of the division between their wills : the justice of God will condemn their souls to the pain of loss and the devil will inflict on their bodies the pain of sense. Would to God that such people who live in religion (it would have been better for them if they had not entered it) had these names printed on their foreheads so that Judas might be known among the Apostles, and Cain among the sons of Adam, and Satan might not be transformed into an angel of light among the sons of God ! Then novices would see that they must not copy nor uphold one who does not do his duty, nor would they be scandalized or follow his bad example or feel astonished because such a man has two hearts, the one contrary to the other. This is worse than having two noses or tongues ; the wise man pities such people, saying : ' Woe to them that are of a double heart . . . and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways.'[1]

On the second part of this text, the gloss comments : ' He goes two ways on the earth who does the works of the flesh and thinks he will sanctify his spirit by fear ; so does he who works for God outwardly while seeking worldly gain in his mind. Of such men the prophet says : " Their heart is divided, now they shall perish : he shall break down their idols, he shall destroy their altars." '[2]

Neither is this Letter of the Alphabet addressed to those whose heart is hardened in wickedness, who are obstinate in their opinions like Pharaoh, and who can be softened by no persuasion. Confirmed in their aridity, they are less apt for tears than the stones of the desert, for these latter gave forth water at the two blows of Moses, but such hearts as these are unaffected by the blow either of fear or love. As Jeremias says : Their hearts are as hard as the point of a diamond, which nothing can break.[3] Job declares : ' They have been rebellious to the light,'[4] therefore they have deserved to be set aside, for it would be easier to turn a Guinea negro white than to make such men devout.

Nor is this Letter of our Alphabet addressed to those whose

[1] Ecclus. ii, 14.
[2] Osee x, 2.
[3] Jer. xvii, 1.
[4] Job xxiv, 13.

heart is not under control, so that it follows everything it sees, like the sparrow-hawk when carried with unhooded eyes, which is never at rest but wants to fly after everything. It has to be hooded so that it will follow its proper prey more keenly when shown to it. The wise man warns us of this, saying: 'Do not apply thy heart to all words that are spoken.'[1] Happy the man who guards his heart as craftily for the spiritual chase of which the prey is God, as the hawk is guarded to catch sparrows! To such as him our Letter directs that he should disencumber his heart in order to admit God, and rid it of all that renders it unfit for such a Dweller and Guest.

Let not those I have blamed complain, or fancy that God will fail them unless they fail him first, nor let them omit to do all they can, for he lodges in many an unexpected place. He sought the publican Zaccheus and another of his trade, and Elias was the self-invited guest of an old woman picking up sticks. Christ, leaving the city of Nazareth, travelled far in order to be born in a manger in Bethlehem, where no one ever imagined so great a Lord would stay.

To such men as those to whom I speak, the prophet Jeremias says (according to the Septuagint translation): 'Bear thy heart on thy shoulders.'[2] Many people lose their heart, either for want of proper care or because it is of a wandering nature. David complains of this when he says: 'My heart hath forsaken me.'[3] These persons should seek their heart as the good Shepherd sought the lost sheep and brought it back on his shoulders. Then they will follow the advice of Jeremias. They should not lead their heart on foot but lift it high on their shoulders, that is, sublime exercises and desires, for thus they will carry their principality upon their shoulders.

David alludes to this when he says to God: 'Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to thee.'[4] The gloss comments on this: 'Nothing is more elusive than the heart, which is held back by discretion.' David says he found his heart because, in order to devote oneself to prayer, of which this *Third Alphabet* treats, it is most essential to chain, restrain, and imprison the heart and keep it in a cell of perpetual silence in order to prevent its wandering, as the wise man counsels: 'With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.'[5]

[1] Eccles. vii, 22. [2] Jer. xxi, 21. [3] Ps. xxxix, 13.
[4] 2 Kings vii, 27. [5] Prov. iv, 23.

CHAPTER II

EXPLAINS THE WORDS OF THE WISE MAN

In order to fathom the depth of these words, we must notice the weight Solomon gives them by their introduction; how high he prices them; how he praises them; how he warns his listeners; how he turns kindly to his disciple and incites his desire to know them, and arouses his attention by this preface: 'My son, hearken to my words, and incline thine ear to my sayings. Let them not depart from thy eyes, keep them in the midst of thy heart: for they are life to those that find them, and health to all flesh.'[1] Solomon says this to heighten the value of what he then wrote as a short compendium of all human perfection: 'With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.' O brief sentence! O grand doctrine! O saying worthy of constant meditation which should ever sound in the memory! O counsel to be ever practised, substance of the spiritual life, first principle on which hang all the Law and the prophets and which contains all the divine law!

All you that have ears to hear, listen to this profound teaching so sublime, so wide, so necessary, so profitable, and worthy to be engraved on the heart in sculptured letters set with precious stones: 'With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out from it.' No scales nor price can fix the value of these words, nor can philosophers and sages of this world attain to it. All the physicians that ever lived, with their books and experience, can give no such remedy for the life of the body as this short sentence affords for the far more precious life of the soul.

This is no wonder, for they were not given to the world by human intellect but by the wisest man who ever lived, inspired and chanted by the Holy Ghost. Solomon, having learnt their truth by experience, declared, by the divine command: 'With all watchfulness keep thy heart, because life issueth out of it.' 'Blessed is he that keepeth the words'[2] of this celestial revelation, for it contains the most certain, brief, comprehensive, and profitable doctrine that can be imagined. It is like a candle shining in a dark place until the day of glory breaks, and Christ, the Light of life, shall shine in our hearts, keeping them with all watchfulness as he, who is the Life, issues forth from them.

Nothing that I have ever read or heard or thought has so thoroughly coincided with my opinion, so constantly influenced

[1] Prov. xx, 2. [2] Apoc. xxii, 7.

me, nor more often recurred to me, than this blessed text. Would that I could praise it worthily or manifest its eloquence to others, but even then I do not think I could disclose all that it contains. The wise man shows beforehand with what love and charity he reveals the sentence. He calls his hearer ' son ' to show it is the best inheritance that, as our father, he could leave us, as a father teaches his son the best way to prosper in life. Thus he makes his son his heir, and binds him to teach it to his children in the future. He bids his son ' hearken,' as though to say : ' Since I, as your father, instruct, you, as a dutiful child, should humbly listen and incline the ears of your soul as vessels to receive such needful doctrine.'

I say more : do not allow yourself to forget this sentence as you do so many others, but let it be a book to you ; read no other and keep it ever open before your eyes. And as books may perish or your eyesight may fail, keep it in the midst of your heart for which it is fit teaching. Since the disciple might answer that the heart is the seat of life upon which none other may sit, Solomon adds that these words are life to those that find them, that is, to those who prove their truth by experience truly, and discover the meaning of the sentence, feeling what they have gained by carrying it out.

The wise man says more : that these words are ' healing to all flesh,' for not only do they produce spiritual life in the soul, but even calm the temptations of the flesh, and heal the wounds and evil inclinations caused by sin, benefiting the whole corporal life. We ought to believe what the wise man says of the potency of this sentence, for he was no less inspired by the Holy Ghost on this point than on the doctrine of the text itself. The gloss says that Solomon means that we should ' keep our heart with all watchfulness as a besieged city guards itself, setting up three defences against its triple enemy, namely : chastity against the flesh which encircles us with delights ; generosity and almsgiving against the world and its riches ; and charity against the devil who besets us with his rancour and enmity.' We must guard our heart with every precaution, for to scrutinize it means to scrutinize our whole life, and from this, according to another gloss, if well done, proceeds life, and if ill, death follows.

S. Isidore says : ' We must be most watchful over the guard of our heart from which arises the beginning of good and evil. Christ meant this when he said : There is no good tree that bringeth forth evil fruit ; nor an evil tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For every tree is known by its fruit. . . . A good man out of the

good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good. . . . For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'[1]

In these words our Lord states that the principle of good or evil is in the heart with which the actions conform as the fruits with the tree. As every exterior movement is caused by the initial movement in the heart, so every good or wicked action resembles the primary intention of the spiritual heart, that is, the man's motive for it. The mind is the root or thought of the action; if this be good, it produces good fruit; if evil, bad fruit is the result. Therefore S. Isidore says: 'The thought brings forth pleasure; pleasure begets consent; consent produces the deed; the deed begets custom; custom breeds necessity and necessity brings forth despair.'

S. Gregory writes: 'The entrance of the soul must be guarded with courage lest the watchful enemy should enter by the breach of hypocrisy and carelessness.' According to this Saint, the heart must be guarded at every point with sleepless eyes. Each of us must watch himself and realize that so long as he lives he will be at war with spiritual foes and must beware lest he loses in one way what he gains in another, closing one door to them and opening a second. If a city were protected from the enemy by a strong bastion and surrounded by high walls and forts as well as towers so that it seemed safe, yet one little door was left unguarded through negligence, the enemy would enter by it, though he appeared to be shut out on every side.

CHAPTER III

THAT THE HEART MUST BE GUARDED LIKE A CASTLE[2]

OUR soul has three chief powers: the rational power of the reason, by which it governs itself; the irascible power, by which it defends

[1] S. Luke vi, 43–5.

[2] S. Teresa marked this chapter repeatedly with crosses and marginal lines. The idea of God dwelling in the heart as in a castle occurs in her works before she wrote *The Interior Castle*. In the *Camino*, ch. xviii, she writes: 'Remember what S. Augustine tells us: . . . how he sought God in many places, and at last found the Almighty within himself. . . . Let us realize that we have within us a most splendid palace built entirely of gold and precious stones—in short, one that is fit for so great a Lord—and that we are partly responsible for the condition of this building, because there is no structure so beautiful as a soul filled with virtues, and the more perfect these jewels are, the more brilliantly do the jewels shine. Within this palace dwells the mighty King who has deigned to become your Father, and who is seated on a throne of priceless value, by which I mean your heart.' This is, of course, the fundamental idea of *The Interior Castle*.

itself; and the power that desires, by which it progresses. The heart must watch over these powers from every quarter to ensure safety. The wise man says that his heart was afraid of three things[1] which we may call deceit, force, and hunger. In these three ways the heart may be taken captive and wounded as is figured by Joab,[2] who thrust three lances into the heart of Absalom and killed him. Joab means 'paternity,' and the devil is the father of the wicked whom he fights, for though they are his sons, he does not spare them, like Joab, who was one of the captains under David who was at war with his own son. Absalom, or 'peace with his father,' is the sinner, son of the devil with whom, when conquered, he makes peace. Being his true son, the demon does not vex him so much with temptations, but makes a kind of peace with him, knowing that the sinner would only act as the demon would counsel him.

It is well known that the vices war more fiercely against the sons of God than against the sons of the devil because the former oppose them and the latter do not. Joab, that is, the devil, pierced the heart of Absalom with the three darts: deceit, fear, and the hunger of wrong desire. Three things caused his death: the first was a wrong and treacherous counsel in which he trusted; the second, his wish to be king; the third, the fear with which he fled that was so great that he could not guide the mule he rode nor find a place of safety as he might easily have done.

The evil one slew Judas also with these three darts. With the first, when he made the Apostle believe that Christ our Redeemer would not know of his wickedness. With the second when he caused him to long for the bribe promised to him. With the third when he made Judas afraid of asking for mercy, so that he hanged himself and fell asunder, and his entrails were scattered on the ground, his heart being wrenched from his body.

Satan trapped the first man in the same way, making him think he would only commit a venial sin which would easily be forgiven, and that God would not treat him as rigorously as he threatened. Then the evil one inspired Adam with hunger, and a wish to please his wife. Thirdly, after his disobedience, the devil caused such dread in Adam that he fled from him from whom he should have begged forgiveness, throwing himself at his feet in penitence like the Magdalen. It is in this manner that the evil one captures and overcomes the unguarded hearts of sinners either wholly or

[1] Ecclus. xxvi, 5.
[2] 2 Kings xviii, 14.

partially.[1] If they wish to follow the advice of the wise man, they should set the three powers of the soul to guard against these three dangers. Stratagem must be opposed by examination, following the example of the Blessed Virgin, who when she saw the angel of light, pondered over his words. She considered that deceit is not hidden beneath right reason, nor darkness under such splendour as that of the angel who appeared to her, and was careful not to pledge herself to undertake what her heart had not first inquired into, as S. Luke testifies.

At the second door by which fear is accustomed to enter and offer violence, the zealous irascible power stations itself to defend the heart and eject the terrors of night, like the valiant ones spoken of in the Canticles who stood, 'all holding swords . . . every man's sword upon his thigh, because of fears in the night.'[2] The thigh denotes chastity which they rigorously defended, as did S. Paul, who chastised his body and brought it into subjection.[3] The blessed martyr, S. Vincent, when he stood before the judge, who thought he could intimidate the Christians and make them deny their religion, said to the other martyr, who was answering him meekly: 'Why do you speak meekly in an undertone to this insolent man? Shout at him and drown his ravings against his Lord.' The third danger, which is the hunger and fierce desires excited by the devil, must be opposed by longings for celestial joys, such as was felt by him to whom the angel said: 'I am now come forth to teach thee . . . because thou art a man of desires.'[4] The strong defence against a craving for worldly things is a longing after what is divine. And note this: if the devil finds the approach to one of these three entrances ill-guarded, he will enter the castle of the heart by it.[5] He captures one in one way and one in another

[1] S. Teresa addresses her nuns as soldiers. 'Let them not be weak and womanish,' she says elsewhere, 'but manly, so that men may wonder at them.' She tells them: 'A resolute soul fights more courageously, knowing that, come what may, it must never retreat. It is like a soldier in the midst of the fray, who knows that if he is vanquished he must expect no quarter, but that if he does not fall during the battle, he will be killed afterwards. . . . We ought to know that unless we allow ourselves to be defeated, we are sure to succeed' (*Camino*, ch. xxiii).

[2] Cant. iii, 8. [3] 1 Cor. ix, 27. [4] Dan. ix, 22–3.

[5] 'O Lord, forget not so soon the great evils that I have done! . . . Pour not a liquor so precious into a vessel so broken. . . . How canst thou commit the defence of the city and the keys of its fortress to a commander so cowardly, who at the first assault will let the enemy enter?' (*Life*, xviii, 6).

'Oh, we do not understand that sin is a pitched battle of all the senses and powers of the soul against God: the greater the sinner's power, the more does he scheme to betray his King' (*Exclam.* xiii, 3).

without attacking the three together in the same person : one suffices to include the rest. Therefore, if we wish to be secure, we must keep our heart with all watchfulness, because life issueth out of it.

We are taught the way symbolically by the guard that was set over the earthly paradise of which Holy Scripture says that God ' Placed before the paradise of pleasure cherubims, and a flaming sword, turning every way, to keep the way of the tree of life'.[1] The heart of the just is an earthly paradise to which the Lord comes for his pleasure, for it is said that his delights are to be with the children of men.[2] And it is a paradise of delight for us as well, for we begin to taste the joy of paradise in our heart, particularly when God dwells in it, and this delight far surpasses all earthly pleasure.[3]

Princes and nobles have country houses where they go to enjoy themselves, as had Kings Solomon and Ahasuerus ; and God, our King and Lord, not content with his heavenly paradise, wishes for a pleasure-house on earth—the heart of man, called the earthly paradise. (*Cor justi est paradisus.*) Its name is paradise, because wherever God is and gives himself to be enjoyed, is paradise. It is called earthly because it is in the clay of our body. It is written of this paradise : ' Grace is like a paradise in blessings, and mercy remaineth for ever.'[4] The wise man makes more mention in this passage of grace than of the heart, for if it is a paradise, it is on account of the divine grace within it, which waters it like a river. It is said that the river of paradise is divided into four streams, because, according to the gloss, grace strengthens in our heart the four cardinal virtues of justice, temperance, prudence, and fortitude, by which means our heart is disposed to perform multitudes of good works.

Solomon also says that it is a paradise in blessings, because such a heart never ceases praising God, and all it receives is his gift produced by no human effort. He adds ' and mercy remaineth for ever,' to show that God's mercy in this world is permanent,

[1] Gen. iii, 24. [2] Prov. viii, 31.

[3] S. Teresa is never tired of speaking of this. She marked this passage in her copy of Osuna's book. Among other passages in her writings we find : ' Wherever God dwells, there is heaven. . . . S. Augustine tells us how he sought God in many places and at last found the Almighty within himself ' (*Camino* xxviii, 2 ; *Castle*, M. iv, ch. iii, 2, 3). ' O my Creator, my true Lord, my Brother ! My soul overflows with joy at remembering how thou hast said : My delight is to be with the children of men ' (*Exclam.* vii, and many other places).

[4] xl, 17.

especially if such a heart, after having been an earthly paradise, is, at the end of life, raised to life eternal, where it will for ever be a heavenly paradise. Our Lord promises this by the prophet : ' I will glorify the place of my glory.'[1]

God is said to have planted this paradise, which is the heart, ' from the beginning,' for at the beginning of our conversion, that is, at our baptism, he infused into it faith, hope, and charity to help the three powers above-mentioned. He comes to this paradise to rebuke those he loves when they sin, as they often do on account of weakness, for I believe that no man living could say with Job : ' My heart doth not reprehend me in all my life.'[2] When your heart accuses you, know that God has come to it to punish your ill deeds, and unless you wish to be cast forth from it like Adam, you must acknowledge your fault and not hide behind the bushes of excuses, making light of your sin as though it were a leaf blown by the wind. Confess with the prophet David : ' My iniquities are gone over my head : and as a heavy burden are become heavy upon me.'[3] If you respond to him in this manner, God will take the burden of your guilt on his own shoulders ; otherwise, you will have to bear it and will learn how weighty it is, as did the first sinners when turned out of paradise.

The earthly paradise grew three kinds of trees : the forbidden tree called the knowledge of good and evil ; the tree of life, and many others which bore fruit and seed after their kind. The latter signify the many virtues that must be implanted in the heart and give the fruit of good works, engendering them in others by good example.

The forbidden tree is self-will : of this we must not eat because we are not to follow our will, for, according to Solomon, we must turn away from our own will.[4] The Lord complains of those who disobey this, saying by the prophet Isaias : ' Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found.'[5] The ' day of our fast ' is any obligation we are under which forbids what would otherwise be lawful, so that every command obliges us to fast and withdraw our will from what it prohibits if it is negative : if the law is affirmative, it forbids what is opposite to it. Therefor every day is the day of our fast on which, under pain of death, we must not eat of the tree of self-will. If we obey, it will benefit us greatly ; if not, we shall suffer much evil ; therefore it is called the tree of good and evil.

[1] Isa. lx, 13. The Douai Bible gives ' the place of my feet,' instead of ' place of my glory ' as in the Spanish. [2] Job xxvii, 6.
[3] Ps. xxxvii, 5. [4] Ecclus. xviii, 30. [5] Isa. lviii, 3.

The tree of life is the spiritual wisdom and consolation of contemplation of which the wise man says : ' She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her : and he that shall retain her is blessed.'[1] The heart that with so great a Guest has become such a paradise should be guarded with the strictest care, as Solomon advises in the manner figured by that of the earthly paradise.

Three things were placed before its portal to prevent anyone from coming near the tree of life. First, there was a company of angels : not those of the lower orders, but Cherubim. Then there was a burning flame which was never quenched, and finally a sword which turned every way ; this contained the flame, though the sword could wound and the fire could burn separately. The Cherubim, remarkable for their wisdom and divine knowledge, could not be deceived by man and induced to open the door to admit him. Flame was with the sword to teach men that even though they should extinguish it with tears they would not be saved, from the sword which was said to turn every way, to teach us that no human skill could evade it. Such was the guard of paradise, which allowed no one to reach the very portal.

Those who seem like angels from their angelic life, show that God dwells in their heart as in a paradise, but they need Cherubim, that is, sublime knowledge of spiritual matters, within them,[2] lest, as the wise man says, wickedness should alter their understanding, or deceit beguile their soul,[3] so that the door of their heart being taken by stratagem, thieves might enter and steal the fruit of the tree of life.

We are told in Ezechiel that the Cherubim lifted up their wings and flew so that the wheels might be raised from the earth.[4] Our hearts are the wheels which cannot cease working and rest. If they wish to rise in order to be safe, the Cherubim, that is, sublime thoughts about God, must mount far above earth to keep guard, as the owner of a vineyard ascends his watch-tower to protect the grapes.

The second door of the heart is the will, which to be safe must bear within it the fire of divine love.[5] This benefits it greatly,

[1] Prov. iii, 18.

[2] It was probably because of these words that S. Teresa believed that the angel who transpierced her heart must have been a Cherub. See *Life*, ch. xxix, 16, 18.

[3] Wisdom iv, 11.

[4] Ezech. x.

[5] Fire was a favourite symbol of S. Teresa's. She likens God to a burning furnace from which flies the spark she so often mentions (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. ii, 6 ; *Life*, chs. xv, xviii, xxi, etc.), also the brazier, the trans-

for like Samson's foxes it burns and destroys the things of this world as though they were tow, and the heat drives off the flies of mundane temptations as the hot steam from the saucepan keeps them at bay. Fire has this property: it separates things that differ and unites those which resemble one another; so an ardent love for God admits what is good and repulses what is evil and contrary to sanctity.

CHAPTER IV

THE THIRD DOOR OF THE HEART

THE third door of the heart is the exterior man or the sensitive nature, which is the same thing. By this means, the flesh attacks the heart that must defend itself with the sword of fear, which cuts short all occasions of evil, and swiftly threatens and punishes those who assault its bearer, aiding him by its menace and support to protect the entrance from his foes. A very sharp, swift sword is needed for this door, which is the greatest peril, being defective and half fallen; we must wield the weapon vigorously with both hands; that is, by servile fear so that either from fear or shame, we may withstand the enemy. In this way, though the first door, that is, the intellect, is assaulted by pride with its vain imaginations, we shall overcome by the subjection that the light of reason will yield to God. Though avarice may come to the second portal, it will be burnt with all its army by love for God—a love which cares solely for heavenly things and despises what is earthly.

Although impurity may come to the door of the sensitive nature, the fear of God, which is a very sharp knife, will circumcize the excesses of the flesh and make it subject to the spirit, so that the heart will be guarded with all watchfulness. The heart is also symbolized by the ark of the Lord which contained three things corresponding to those which guarded paradise. The Cherubim, a name which signifies plenitude of knowledge, are like the tables of the law; the fire of love resembles the sweet manna which came down from heaven; the rod of castigation which God commanded should be put in the ark corresponds with the sword. With these three things within it, it was called the ark of the friendship of God, as the heart under these conditions is named God's paradise of delight.

piercement of her heart with a golden spear pointed with fire (*Life*, ch. xxix) that reminds one of the fiery sword of Osuna. Fire also typifies love, both divine and human.

To understand the text of the wise man more fully we must consider it word by word. Not content with bidding us guard our heart, which would suffice, he adds, ' with all watchfulness,' meaning with all our power. He calls it *thy* heart, for a man is more careful of what is his own property. The reason he gives for guarding it is also comprehensive ; he does not only say that life dwells in it, but that life issues out from it, vivifying what lives in us, so that if life ceased in the heart, all life in us would cease. If the snake is so cunning in screening its head with its body as the source of its life, and nature hides the roots of trees in the earth lest the life which rises from them to the branches, leaves, and flowers should be injured, how much more should you guard your heart diligently, since your whole life issues from it ?

By saying that we must guard our heart on every side,[1] Solomon infers that it could be injured at any point. The heart being like a ship's pump, can collect filth from any quarter. The pump is in the middle of the vessel, and being in the lowest part, collects not only whatever water may be in the ship, but any that may enter from without. Our heart is the same. It is situated in the midst of the little ship of our body and collects all its ills, wounds, troubles, vices, and occupations. Those who retire to pray know this. Whatever may have happened to them, they find in their heart, where it distracts and annoys them. Like the ship's pump, it is in the lowest place, for we know by experience that often when our body is upraised to the choir and the altar, our heart is occupied with the basest of earthly affairs. Since it can be injured from every quarter, the wise man may well advise us to guard it watchfully, as Holy Scripture bids us guard all the members of our body for the greater safety of our heart. The prophet Isaias says : ' Blessed is the man . . . that keepeth his hands from doing any evil,'[2] lest his heart should do wrong : again, we are told that we should guard our lips,[3] so that our heart should not suffer from our having murmured ; and elsewhere we are warned to guard our feet[4] that our heart may not trip. S. Paul tells Timothy to keep himself chaste[5] that his heart may not be soiled, and Moses enjoins that we should watch our soul carefully[6] lest our heart should be condemned with it. If Leviticus orders us to observe the feasts ordained by God, it is that we may rest and give our heart repose. If we are to maintain justice it is that our heart

[1] The Spanish has : ' *Guarda tu corazon con toda guarda.*'
[2] Isa. lvi, 2. [3] Prov. xvi, 13. [4] Eccl. iv.
[5] 1 Tim. v, 22. [6] Deut. iv, 9.

may be rightly ruled. We are bidden to keep the law[1] to ward evil from our heart: we must be wise[2] in order that our heart may be so too and that the heart of God may rejoice in it, as he says.[3] We are bidden to be prudent so that our heart may be well regulated and may know how to govern others: to be innocent that our heart may be free from malice;[4] to perform penance in order to govern our heart;[5] to show mercy;[6] to render our hearts gentle and pitiful. The wise man includes all this in his counsel of guarding our heart in all watchfulness, for it is more shifting than quicksilver and more subtle, for it escapes through the narrowest chink that no one could imagine it could pass through. It is so delicate that anything may injure it, so that it needs the most watchful guard.

This is not kept by those of whom our Lord says: 'The devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved.'[7]

CHAPTER V

HOW THIS LETTER APPLIES TO RECOLLECTION

ALTHOUGH what has been said of the guard over the heart has been true and right and applies to this Letter and the spiritual exercise of which we treat, yet the principal advice I wish to give and the relation of the wise man's words to this Letter remain to be told. He says we must cleanse our hearts, and this in such a way as to rid them of all created things, so that God alone may remain in them. Of this S. Anselm says: 'He who renounces himself for God, enjoys God. Enter the asylum of your soul, and cast all things from it, giving place to God.'

When princes or kings come to stay at a house, it is first cleaned and emptied, leaving nothing but the walls, so that the monarch may bring all he wants with him; he only wishes to have the building freed from dirt. Thus our Letter bids you cleanse your heart from all vices and human impediments and created things, so that God may find more room there.[8] As S. John says, he is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things,[9] and the more we empty our heart of created things, the better is it prepared for him. A person whose hand trembles cannot hold a vase and fill

[1] Prov. iii, 21. [2] Prov. xix, 29. [3] Malachy ii.
[4] Ps. xxxvi, 37. [5] Job xxi, 2. [6] Prov. xi, 19.
[7] S. Luke viii, 12.
[8] 'Detach your heart from all things; seek God, and you will find him' (Maxim 36). [9] 1 S. John iii, 20.

it to the brim without spilling the liquid ; so our heart, while in the power of our mind which trembles and knows no rest, is not perfectly full of God until our mind is firmly fixed on him, so that we may be filled with his plenitude. As S. Paul says : ' It is best that the heart be established with grace.'[1]

The Apostle also urges us to cleanse our heart and free it from all that is created, saying : ' The peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.'[2] Therefore, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keeps our hearts and minds when his quietude raises us above the bodily senses to what is more sublime, and our heart ceases thinking of created things, our intelligence being solely occupied with him, admitting no thought of any below him. Then indeed is the heart guarded with all watchfulness for God alone, who goes forth from it with silence, like the waters of Siloe, which the people incurred much blame for despising.[3]

The wise man bids us keep our heart with all watchfulness without allowing any thought to enter it, for this would impede the life which is God (the source of which is in man's heart) from issuing forth. That this life may go forth as from an abundant spring, we need but to guard our heart watchfully, cleansing and emptying it of all created things, so that their Creator alone may go forth as a life of grace. By this means we give place to him, and do not hinder his procession and out-going. We may consider Solomon's words again in this manner : he tells us to guard our heart in three ways : as regards our actions, by doing nothing harmful to it ; as regards our words, for if the heart is to keep silence, the lips must first be guarded ; thirdly, as regards the thoughts, which guard must be universal and very watchful by emptying the heart of created things that there may the better issue forth from it the life, which is God, who proceeds from it solely to give life to the soul and to unite it to himself, as the mortal life which goes forth from the heart vivifies the body and joins it to the soul. It is written : ' Draw near to God, for he is thy life.' The life of the body comes from union with the soul and that of the soul from union with God. Since this latter is our supreme need, the Lord chose that his source should be in our heart so that it may be said to all men : ' With thee is the fountain of life.'[4]

Since the fountain of life is so near us that we need not go out of ourselves to seek it, it would be well for us to enter ourselves

[1] Heb. xiii, 9. [2] Phil. iv, 7.
[3] Isa. viii, 6. [4] Ps. xxxv, 10.

and cleanse the fount of our heart and guard it afterwards with all watchfulness, for life issues from it. This emptiness of heart, necessary in order that God should fill it, is symbolized by the empty vessels lent to the woman.[1] So we must offer our heart freed from all created things to spiritual Wisdom, that he may infuse into it a drop of his grace that will multiply until it fills it. This is what the wise man meant when he said: 'The wisdom of a scribe cometh by his time of leisure: and he that is less in action shall receive wisdom,'[2] for he shall be full of it. This wisdom, that is, the sweet taste or discernment of heavenly things, understood by experience, is best received when the heart is void of all else and has ceased not only from exterior but also from interior operations, setting aside its relations with creatures in order to be occupied and filled with the operation of the Holy Ghost.

No one has ever experienced this so perfectly as the immaculate Virgin when she set self aside and offered her most pure heart, freed from all occupations that might distract it, that by the coming of the Holy Ghost upon her the power of God might cause a divine darkness in her heart, and beneath his overshadowing she might conceive the Son of God. We read that before the Spirit of God moved over the waters, the earth was void and empty.[3] So the earth of our heart must be evacuated of all creatures in order the better to receive God, who fills all things. He bade his people make an empty altar which, according to Holy Scripture, was not solid but hollow and made of sethim wood.[4] This wood is incorruptible and very light, and our heart, which is the true altar of God, should be light so that it may rise to celestial things, being, as this Letter says, empty as well as incorruptible, and so strong that nothing material can drag it down, nor can any desire find place in it except our desire for God. This desire of ours is a most holy sacrifice, and must be so ardent and pure that our thoughts cannot wander to any other subject, so that the heart remains empty of all else.

S. Paul had thus cleared his heart when, speaking of charity and an imperfect knowledge of God, he said: 'When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child. But when I became a man, I put away the things of a child.'[5]

According to the Apostle, children should think and under-

[1] 4 Kings iv, 4. [2] Ecclus. xxviii, 25. [3] Gen. i.
[4] Exod. xxxix, 25. [5] 1 Cor. xiii, 9–11.

stand childish things, and men should relinquish them for something better. All creatures are childish things compared with their Creator, therefore S. Paul writes that when he came to that which is perfect, that is, the contemplation of the Divinity, he did away with what is imperfect and childish, meaning the contemplation of created things, to give himself, with a heart emptied of all things, to the Lord who wants it all. Therefore David bids us pour out our hearts before him[1] so as to think of nothing else but him. And the prophet Jeremias says: 'Arise, give praise in the night, in the beginning of the watches: pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord.[2] We should rise from what is created to the uncreated and in them praise the Lord of the night, which is the privation of human knowledge, so that we may be able to say: 'Night shall be my light in my pleasures.'[3] We must do this in the beginning of the watches, for we must persevere so that the Lord may find us watching during all of them.

We must purify our heart from all earthly thoughts as water purifies a vase and leaves nothing behind, so that it may be full of divine unction and the living water of grace. This emptiness is very different from that of the heart of the fool, which the wise man says is a broken vessel which shall hold no wisdom,[4] so that 'the graces of fools shall be poured out.[5] Their vessels are empty because they are broken: those of the just are whole and filled with the fire of the spirit of love which with its heat drives out material things. As a symbol of this, all the vessels of the temple were purified by fire so as to be perfectly clean.

Therefore you must empty and cleanse your heart, for it is the lamp of the prudent virgin; that is, your soul, and when you go forth to meet your Bridegroom it must contain the oil of mercy and the light of faith: it is a meagre pittance with which God is content, as the noble hawk is satisfied with the heart of its prey: it is the divine consistory in which God reveals his secrets: it is the furnace into which the Angel of Great Counsel descends to cool the air for those who walk in it;[6] it is the 'little chamber' of the true Eliseus; the golden vase full of the manna of heavenly grace set in the ark of your breast; the thurible with which God incenses himself;[7] the narrow manger in which the Child Jesus is born; his flowery bed; the garden of King Assuerus in which with his own hands he grafts the different virtues; the rainbow

[1] Ps. lxi, 9. [2] Lam. ii, 19. [3] Ps. cxxxviii, 11.
[4] Ecclus. xxi, 17. [5] *Ibid.* xx, 13. [6] Dan. iii.
[7] 'Sometimes the whole creature, body and soul, is enraptured as if some very fragrant ointment, resembling a delicious perfume, had

of the friendship of God set in the clouds of tears to remind him how he loves us ; the little ' city of God ' made joyful by the flow of grace ;[1] the book of life by which you will be judged ; the holy sepulchre of the body of Christ, the altar upon which we sacrifice our desires to God ; the paradise in which God and his friends enjoy intercourse and mutual delight ; it is a golden brazier in the temple of God ; the pure and spacious receptacle of his holy graces, if it is emptied and cleansed as it ought to be and guarded with all watchfulness, as I have said.

been infused into the very centre of the being, or as if we had suddenly entered a place redolent of scents coming from not one but many objects ' (*Concep.*, ch. iv, 2). ' The soul is conscious of what may be described as a fragrance, as if within its inmost depths were a brazier sprinkled with sweet perfumes ' (*Castle*, M. ii, ch. iv, 6 ; *Ibid.* vi, ii, 14 ').

[1] Ps. xlv, 5.

FIFTH TREATISE

OF THE CIRCUMSPECTION WE MUST PRACTISE IN ALL THINGS, SAYING: 'EXAMINE, BE CAUTIOUS, AND PERFECT YOUR ACTIONS'[1]

CHAPTER I

STRICT EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE REQUIRED OF THE JUST

THAT there is a great difference between the just and the unjust is patent to everyone. A man is known to another by his actions, but God does not know these actions imperfectly by the results, but by the motive which brings about the results: he sees the heart, while we can only judge by outward appearances which are often deceptive. Snow may cover a dung-hill; pills are gilded, and bitter almonds are coated with sugar. God knows the root and sees what springs from it, while we can only guess at the interior by the exterior. A just man's principal characteristic is solicitude and care in matters of conscience. When these are wanting in anyone, we think he is bad, for he lacks the root of all goodness: the watch he should keep over his soul, as the wise man declares: 'The heart of the wicked seeketh after evils.'[2] This solicitude is contrary to their habit, but those who seek God consider what is necessary for just and holy actions. Therefore, if you wish to be numbered among the just, do what our Letter advises: 'Examine, be cautious, and perfect your actions.'

You may object that this Letter is not appropriate to the *Third Alphabet*, which is supposed to relate to perfection. I answer that everything has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and that in each exercise there may be beginners, proficients, and the perfect, both in nature, skill, and grace. You will see, if you consider it, that there is both the blade, the ear, and the grain. I am not referring to the three Alphabets, but to each letter of the

[1] The fifth treatise, the Letter E, begins in the Spanish with *Examina y hazte experto. . . .*

[2] Prov. xxvii, 21.

three, for if every good man must examine his works and perfect them, this is more binding on proficients, and the better they are, the more fitting it is.

A Doctor of the Church declares that constraint is the law for the perfect in almost everything. Taking the word *constraint* broadly, he means that the perfect should diminish the latitude of conscience of the proficient, which is that of good men. So that all the just must examine and perfect their actions, but the more holy are bound to do so with greater strictness. For if all men must scrutinize their deeds to see whether they sin or not, it is far more incumbent on those whose works being of a higher nature would do greater harm if they erred. Everyone ought to be willing to take thought, especially kings and great personages.

Therefore when our Letter counsels you to examine your actions and progress in perfection, do not take a commonplace view of it, or think it will suffice to make an ordinary examination, which seems rather a form than a reality, like that of those who are to be ordained or to undergo a public examination in the schools at the hands of the masters who have prepared them. Such is the way of sinners, who take no more trouble over this examination than they would over any daily duty, because the devil has bribed them.

Such people not only examine their conscience very negligently, but when Lent comes and they are obliged to submit it to the discreet investigation of a learned and good priest, they seek a bad confessor who, on account of his own sins, minimizes those of others, and they lay their daily sins before him. Or they go to an ignorant priest who knows no more how to examine their conscience than they do ; or they choose one who is very poor, who, that he may not lose the pittance they offer him or offend him, pronounces an absolution he has no right to grant, because they have bribed him, or he hopes they will.

In such a case, God does not give his approval, and the penitent is deceived. As S. Paul says : ' The sensual man perceiveth not these things that are of the Spirit of God : for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand : because it is spiritually examined.'[1]

Passion and human desire are called madness, for the one makes a man beside himself, the other deprives him of reason while it lasts, so that when they master him he has lost sound reason like a madman, nor can he listen to it any more than we can see the blue sky while it is clouded over. The right judgement of such

[1] 2 Cor. ii, 14.

a man is blinded with a cloud of evil desires and self-love, and he does not understand that such an examination as I described is useless on account of the deception practised, and that spiritually he is and will be examined by God who will try us by fire,[1] purifying the sanctity of the just and manifesting the unfathomed guilt of sinners. For fire makes gold finer and more precious, so that it gains in quality what it loses in quantity, though other things are totally destroyed by it.

Thus, though the just may seem outwardly to be injured by the trials by which God examines them, yet in the end they gain merit. This is not the case with the wicked, who both in this world and in the next, as well as in their reputations, go from bad to worse, like Antiochus and the men of Sodom, who are burning for ever in the fire of hell, from which they will not come out except to receive a stricter condemnation at God's general judgement. Therefore, in order to have nothing to do with that place and not to be sent there by the Examiner, our Letter bids you examine your actions more narrowly every day, that they may come forth refined from the furnace of your conscience purified like gold.[2]

CHAPTER II

OF THE FIRST POINT TREATED OF IN THIS LETTER

THIS Letter contains three principal words forming the three points of our explanation of it. The first advises you to examine into doubtful and dangerous matters. The second that you should learn by experience how to act. The third that day by day you perfect your behaviour.

It is very sensible to be rather mistrustful in hazardous affairs and not trust to repayment except on reasonable grounds, for 'the wise man will fear in everything,'[3] and the greater the dangers, the stronger the dread. Prudent sailors drop a long line with a plummet at the end of it into the sea to sound its depth, lest the ship should run aground; they regulate their course by the chart on which dangers are marked; their ship carries a number of sails to be used according to the wind, and they govern the helm by the compass which always points to the north. They take

[1] Ps. lxv, 10.

[2] 'Examine your conscience in all your actions and at all times, endeavouring by the grace of God to amend all the failings you discover: thus you will attain perfection' (Maxim 27.)

[3] Ecclus. xviii, 27.

many other precautions, and even then they do not feel safe, but the pilot keeps constant watch to avoid dangers.

This applies to our subject, for our way is in the sea, and our paths in many waters,[1] and each virtuous and holy practice is a little boat in which every just man with his interior household and little world ought to save himself. We see there are many kinds of religious exercises, but each, with its own kind of vocation, may be called a ship according to the Psalm: 'Let them sacrifice the sacrifice of praise: and declare his works with joy. They that go down to the sea in ships, doing business in the great waters: these have seen the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.'[2]

Of worldlings who mount the stormy waves of the world, we say nothing here; we speak of those who humbly descend in the vast ships of sublime religious exercises, sailing over the sea of this life to the port of salvation. The present life is called a sea because it is troubled by so many whirlwinds and tempests, amid which he perishes who is not in one of these ships, for no one can travel otherwise. As some vessels navigate in fresh and others in salt water, so there are devout exercises which custom has made sweet, so that the tears shed in them by souls that navigate are sweet: other practices are more painful and cause bitter tears. But it is safer and better to sail over salt than sweet water, so that the latter persons are not worse off. In fact, seeing they are in greater danger, they examine themselves better and offer more sacrifices and vows to the Lord, and when delivered from the storm, they 'declare his works with joy,' as David says. The more tears their sea contains, the better is the interior and exterior action of such souls.

The waters of the third kind of souls will be sweet, for, according to Pliny, there is a sea with fresh water to which their tears may be compared. If you take ship over this ocean by the third and final spiritual exercise, you will see, as David says, 'the wonders of the Lord in the deep' of your heart, as the gloss explains. Of these vessels, which are holy exercises, it may be said: 'All were made rich, that had ships at sea.'[3] In this ship of our holy exercise (of contemplation) Christ rests and sleeps; meanwhile sometimes a storm arises at sea. Often, while God is with us we are more fiercely attacked than at other times, and the soul feels that he reposes quietly within it while it is tempted from without. He permits this to test our confidence, and I do not think the tempest will cease until he bids it, for the sea is

[1] Ps. lxxvi, 20. [2] Ps. cvi, 22–4. [3] Apoc. xviii, 19.

bitter by nature, and we must go to Christ and beg him to still it and give us peace.

These ships which symbolize holy exercises are mentioned in the Book of the Machabees, where it says that Simon set carvings of ships over the sepulchre of his father and brothers to be seen by all who sailed by the sea.[1] Simon, which means 'obedient,' is a symbol of all good Christians who obey God's commandments and counsels. They 'carve ships' by practising these spiritual exercises founded on the sepulchre of their Father Christ, that is, on his sacred Passion, which is the safe foundation of all devout practices. Their brothers are the saints of former times whom we ought to imitate. These ships must be seen by those who sail by the sea of this life in order that they may seek to save themselves by imitating these devout exercises, or by prayer or by some other way.

The prosperous wind by which the ship of our exercises must sail is the inspiration of the Holy Spirit which must waft us to the port of salvation, that is the clear knowledge of God. Then we shall resemble those of whom it is said: 'Sent by the Holy Ghost . . . they sailed to Cyprus.'[2] Those are sent by the Holy Ghost who obey his inspiration, which fills their sails magnificently (that is, their desires) until they reach Cyprus, which means 'beauty,' of which it is said: 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence.'[3]

I wrote that the sails are our desires that must be perfectly pure and clean, since the port we seek is the knowledge of God, which none can attain save the pure in heart. Hence it is written of the ship of Tyre: 'Fine broidered linen . . . was woven for thy sail.'[4] The mast is the love of God, which the same prophet declares was made of cedar and incorruptible, as the soul should never fail in the practise of any exercise; the cedar must come from Libanus, which means 'beatitude,' for infused charity is perfect love. To this mast must be fastened the ropes of peace and concord with God, ourselves, and our neighbour, which in Holy Scripture are called 'the bands of love.'[5] The mariner's compass is faith, by which the rudder must be directed, and the helm is prudence. The compass points to the north, for faith must rule us and raise us to contemplation: between the two is discretion, which is very necessary. The pilot is good counsel: he must be guided by the mariner's chart, that is, the Holy Scriptures, if he wishes to avoid mistakes. The sounding-line is

[1] 1 Mach. xiii, 29. [2] Acts xiii, 14. [3] Isa. xxxii, 18.
[4] Ezech. xxvii, 7. [5] Osee xi, 4.

prudence, by which we must measure what is to be done if we wish to succeed : the pilot, or sage counsel, must plumb the water over which we sail, that is, our restless life.

We must consider these warnings carefully for fear of the great perils we run, especially during this present life, which is full of pitfalls even with regard to the ship itself, or on the part of the pilot if he is careless, for he must examine all things diligently.

I have read of many perils by sea which might injure our vessel of devout exercises, particularly as regards this *Third Alphabet*. One book gives twelve, another twelve more, and after having read their warnings and the list of deceptions into which spiritual persons are accustomed to fall, they seem to me more calculated to alarm people than to make them cautious. Gardeners put scarecrows in their gardens to frighten the birds away from the fruit. These writings, with their fictitious reasons and dangers and risks of deceptions into which devout souls may fall, their warnings about examining this and that, lest they should do so and so, besides which this, that, and the other must be guarded against, are multiplied in such a manner to humble souls that the latter fly from such exercises in terror to avoid danger and the trouble of such minute examinations.

Thus the authors of these books, who think they are helping them, do much harm to simple persons, who, as the Psalm says, tremble for fear where there is no fear.[1] Let these writers consider that God forbade the creditor to extract a tooth either from the upper or lower jaw of the debtor, for both are required to eat with. He takes away our upper tooth who deprives us of the hope of attaining to contemplation, and robs us of our lower tooth when he frees us from fear of the dangers which attend such prayer : the one loss is as bad as the other.

Gerson warns us to be watchful on many points ; but as I think every sensible person will know of them and they are common to all states, I do not mention them, but will only say, as Gerson himself, as well as persons much experienced in contemplation, declare, that it is a safe way, with less occasion for stumbling than others.

Those who terrorize souls who seek to go by it think that they excuse their own negligence by pretending that they neglect it rather from fear than from want of good-will. Let them believe me and not trust themselves, nor fly from the battle before they receive a blow, nor turn back on the road before they see a reason for it. Do not trust those, brother, who tell you there are many

[1] Ps. xiii, 5.

highwaymen on this road. If anyone is robbed on it, this is because he was not provided with the virtues I enjoined in the comparison of the ship, and in other places of the Letters. If one person is murdered on a certain road, everyone is afraid of travelling by it, but it would be better if people were more cautious in future instead of abandoning it. It seems to me that every way has some drawback and danger and there are risks to fear in every ship, for there is nothing but a plank between its passengers and death.[1]

It is well known that there is greater cause for timidity in the hardest tasks, as mistakes made in them are more dangerous. But, as Richard[2] says, fear is the worst temptation in great undertakings, for it frightens us from performing the work lest we should commit some error, and we do not reflect that the most serious error is to renounce the undertaking through fear.

It was not without a hidden meaning that our Lord bade Gedeon, when he was about to deliver Israel, to order the men who were fearful and timorous not to join in the battle, for they were unworthy of gaining the victory. God told the Jews, when they were preparing to engage in any war, to bid the soldiers not to fear, because the Lord their God was in the midst of them.[3] Again the Lord said: 'What man is there that is fearful and faint-hearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest he make the hearts of his brethren to fear.'[4] The Lord dismissed the

[1] Speaking of the objections made by other people against the practice of prayer by the nuns, S. Teresa writes: 'Men will warn us again and again of the risks we run. Such a person was lost through this; another fell into error through it; someone else who practised prayer went wrong; it injures virtue. . . . Take no heed of the warnings people give you or the dangers they suggest. It is absurd to imagine that one could travel along a road full of bandits to reach a costly treasure without running any risks. . . . If when you are trying to earn or "bear away" this treasure for yourselves, and are travelling by the royal and safe road by which our Lord, all the elect, and the saints passed—if even then men warn you of so many dangers, so many horrors—what must be the risks incurred by those who seek these riches with no path to guide them? Oh, my daughters! there can be no comparison between the hazard of such travellers and our own. Yet such souls never realize this until they fall headlong into peril, with no one to help them out of it. . . . See how blind men are. The world never reckons the thousands who have fallen into heresy and other grievous crimes through never practising prayer' (*Camino* xxi, 4).

'If there be a state in which the danger is least, it is theirs who most frequently think of God, and labour to be perfect in their lives' (*Found.* ch. iv, 3).

[2] Of St. Victor. [3] Deut. vii, 21. [4] Deut. xx, 8.

timid lest they should frighten the others with their causeless terror.

Certain persons tell those given to prayer that they should fear, because the grace of contemplation and interior consolations are among the gifts that may be possessed even by infidels, as well as that of performing miracles, the gift of tongues, and very many other favours God bestows on man. They declare that sometimes this grace is a sign of reprobation and is imputed to condemnation. They even declare, as very well-grounded and sound advice, that no one ought to wish to taste the divine sweetness in this world.

These and many other things they teach which do great harm to simple and holy persons who practise this most praiseworthy, sublime devotion, and who long, as God desires and commands they should, to taste and see how sweet are his sacred grace and love.

I once read a very devout book which greatly roused me from my tepidity to love the Lord. I praised it to a theologian as being very useful for those who wish to taste in this world the sacred manna which Jesus Christ sends from heaven to his own. The theologian answered in a faltering voice as expressive as his words: 'Oh, how many souls this book will send to hell!' Greatly astonished I asked him why: he replied that it advised people to draw near God in order to enjoy his sweetness.

Another religious spoke of this book to a second theologian who was extremely learned and virtuous, and who said that he had read it and found that it contained everything that was good about contemplation that he had found in other writings on the subject. Take warning by the difference of opinion of these two learned men, and do not lightly believe what anyone says against devotion. If some book tells you that you must guard against people who have raptures as though they were mad, do not credit it. If you are told that this is the opinion of a saint, answer that no saint rashly condemns what may be good without carefully examining it first. I believe that some irreligious persons insert such opinions in the writings of the saints in order to defend their own theory.

Though in our times God bestows such graces on many people, there are others so opposed to it that when they see in others exterior signs of favours they themselves do not receive, they think those so honoured must be mad or deluded or possessed, and the least evil they attribute to such persons is hypocrisy. As a rule

they accuse them of being insane or possessed.[1] To those who are thus persecuted we may apply what was said of our Lord: 'When his friends had heard of it, they went out to lay hold on him. For they said: He is become mad. And the scribes who were come down from Jerusalem, said: He hath Beelzebub.'[2] On account of Christ's fervour of spirit, they sought to bind him, and S. Jerome believes that he was reputed to be mad in order to show what some of his followers would have to suffer for him. Those who neither on account of their sanctity (for they have none) nor of their learning (as they are ignorant) can know anything of the impulses of the devout, at once condemn those whom they have no right to judge, and say that no saint acts in such a manner—as though they had been intimate with all the saints when they dwelt on earth!

Although there is no account written of all that the saints underwent, we know well that S. Francis and S. Dominic and many of their companions were unable to suppress their emotions, and cried aloud and acted in other strange ways. Since these saints underwent such experiences, it is not surprising that other devout persons should do so now. However, it is safer to avoid any external signs if it can be done without prejudice to true devotion. S. Bonaventure speaks at length on this subject, and learned men who understand the roots of the lower passions of the soul find no difficulty in believing things which you can hardly listen to without showing by your gestures the passion you feel at hearing of them. If you hear such divine favours ridiculed, your delight makes you unable to control your laughter. This shows you that others may have emotions in their soul that may cause outward gestures and may be too powerful to be suppressed. Of this the wise man says: 'It is not in man's power to stop the spirit.'[3] Job

[1] S. Teresa suffered severely from being told that the favours shown her were false and she was deceived by the devil. (See *Life*, chs. xxv and xxvii; *Castle*, vi, iii, 8, etc.)

Speaking of raptures, etc., S. Teresa writes on January 17, 1577, to her brother Lorenzo de Cepeda: 'For more than a week I have been in a spiritual state which, if it continues, may cause me ill success with my many business affairs. Before I last wrote my ecstasies had returned, which distressed me as they sometimes occurred in public and during Matins. Resistance is useless, nor can they be concealed. I felt so utterly ashamed that I wanted to hide myself, no matter where. I pray earnestly that I may no longer have raptures in public. Will you pray about it, for there are many disadvantages and it does not seem to me a higher form of prayer?'

[2] S. Mark iii, 21, 22.

[3] Eccles. viii, 8.

asks: 'Who can withhold the words he hath conceived?'[1] Then how much less can anyone withhold the impetus of the Word of God? Let the unbeliever answer the wise man's question: 'Can a man hide fire in his bosom, and his garments not burn?'[2] When anyone holds in his bosom God, who is called the devouring Flame of our ills, no wonder that the burning love the Lord kindles within is shown in the outer vestment of the soul, which is the body, in which various gestures are caused.

Since this is so, brother, follow the advice of this Letter, which bids you examine your interior movements and actions carefully, so that you may not fear men's scrutiny. The wise man says regarding this: 'My son, prove thy soul in thy life: and if it be wicked, give it no power: for all things are not expedient for all, and every kind pleaseth not every soul.'[3] Solomon writes: 'Hear thou, my son, and be wise: and guide thy mind in the way.'[4] And again: 'A wise heart shall acquire knowledge: and the ear of the wise seeketh instruction.'[5]

God shows many mercies to some people, who quickly lose them for want of care in their behaviour; if you wish to retain them for a long time, examine all your affairs prudently, both small and great, for the wise man says that he who despises little things shall go from bad to worse.

You ought also to examine your bodily dispositions, for the flesh feigns necessities when there are none. Sometimes you will fancy you feel a thirst which is imaginary. After a long rest, you will feel greatly tired and indisposed; you ought to examine into this with a very hard discipline which gives sharp pain; if anything else is needed, do not hesitate, for sloth should be carefully examined into. If the indisposition remains, it cannot be sloth. Religious often go to Matins feeling indisposed and are quite well by the time the Office is finished. Others, after many hours of sleep, still slumber, which is manifestly the work of the devil, who is always awake in order to prevent our vigils. Sometimes one detects his tricks, and finds that on making an effort one can perform one's duty perfectly well. You must examine such affairs in this manner.[6]

[1] Job iv, 2. [2] Prov. vi, 27. [3] Ecclus. xxxvii, 30, 31.
[4] Prov. xxiv, 19. [5] Prov. xviii, 15.

[6] 'Some of us seem to think we only entered the convent in order to keep ourselves alive and to nurse and pamper our bodies as well as we can. . . . Be convinced, sisters, that you came here to die for Christ, not to indulge yourselves for him. The devil suggests that we need to take care of ourselves in order to observe the Rule. Such nuns are so exceedingly anxious to preserve their health so that they may be able to

CHAPTER III

THAT WE SHOULD LEARN BY EXPERIENCE

THE second word of our Letter bids you be cautious, that is, learn by experience. As everyone is bound to know what pertains to his duty, you ought to seek someone who will teach you, or a book in which directions are given. The only teacher of this wisdom of the heart, which is gained by devotion alone, is experience. Of this S. Bernard says : ' Why do we utter these secret words in public ? Why do we strive to express these ineffable feelings in common words ? The inexperienced will not understand them unless they read them stated more clearly in the book of experience and are taught by this unction. Otherwise, mere words will be worthless to those who read them and of little interest unless their heart supplies the gloss and inner meaning.'

These words of S. Bernard show that you should be very cautious respecting interior devotion so as to learn from comparing one thing with the other. Some of these favours do not entail so much trouble as the others, for it is one thing for God to bestow a grace and another to enable us to understand it. He confers the first grace on many without the second gift of understanding it, however much the soul may long for it. For instance, when one friend gives another a present brought from abroad, if the latter does not know what it is, he is not satisfied until he has found out. So it is in spiritual matters. When God bestows on his friends some gift which comes from so far away that they cannot tell what it is nor why he gave it, they weep with longing to know the secret, as S. John wept when he saw that the book with the seven seals was closed. For they conjecture that this grace is one of those given by the Holy Ghost, who bestows the seven gifts ; yet, not knowing what it is, they say with Job : ' This my hope is laid up in my bosom.'[1]

Every spiritual grace received by the soul may be called its hope, for divine mercies greatly kindle this virtue, and we may safely conjecture that God will grant in heaven the delights of his glory to those whom he allowed to taste of them during this

obey the Rule that they die without ever having observed it for a month or perhaps even for a single day. . . . The body possesses this defect—the more you give it, the more it requires. It is wonderful how fond it is of comfort, and what pretexts it will offer to obtain it, however little needed ; it deceives the unfortunate soul and prevents its making progress ' (*Camino*, chs. x and xi. See *Concep.* ii, 17–20).

[1] Job xix, 27.

earthly exile. Of this S. Bernard says : ' The more you grow in grace, the more will your confidence be dilated ; consequently you will love with greater ardour and ask more trustingly for what you feel you lack.' From what this saint has said, and reason will tell us, it seems audacity to suppose that the grace of devotion can be either the sign or cause of reprobation. In truth, nothing can bear stronger testimony to our conscience of the love of God for us than to learn by experience how he communicates to us his sacred spiritual gifts, by which we may conjecture that he loves us, for all men agree that the principal characteristic of love is to share its goods with the beloved.

Objectors declare that such graces are not in themselves a sign or cause of reprobation if we use them well. This may be said of all temporal, natural, and celestial things, which, if we use them wrongly, will increase our torments, not because we have received them, for this is right, but because we have employed them badly, which is sinful. Some of these writers are so contentious as even to maintain that God sometimes gives the grace of devotion, as he gives worldly honours and riches, as a reward to those who have rendered him slight services and whom he will afterwards condemn. God thus rewarded the Romans, who, though very virtuous, did not deserve heaven because they attributed their virtues to themselves. Lest they should receive no recompense, God in return made them masters of the world for five hundred years as a temporal repayment for their labours. He acts in the same way now towards many people, requiting them with worldly pleasures and happiness that make their life an earthly paradise from which they will be cast down to hell. This is prefigured in Judas, who, after having accepted the thirty pieces of silver, hanged himself : also in the prodigal son, who, taking his share of his inheritance, went into a distant country, and if he had perished there, would have been lost for ever. In the same way, Abraham gave his bastard children gifts and left them no inheritance.[1] To these people the eternal Father gives but one blessing, for they will not be of those to whom he says : ' Come, ye blessed of my Father.'

Some authorities have the audacity to say that God sometimes gives this interior consolation to the soul even of sinners in reward for their insignificant services, as he gives honours and temporal riches, which are also his gifts. This I would neither dare to say nor approve nor write, even though the motive ascribed to it was said to be that of a threat. Spiritual sweetness and a relish for

[1] Gen. xxv, 6.

celestial joys is the chief of the sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit which he reserves for his friends, for as charity is pre-eminent among the virtues, so is the gift of wisdom among the gifts.

S. Gregory says that it is a gift of the Holy Spirit which perfects and nourishes the soul with the hope and certitude of eternal things. Therefore wisdom, in accordance with its name, means the taste or relish it causes in the soul[1] which is termed a pledge, or security, or sign of eternal life, according to the writings of the saints. The reason is, S. Gregory states, that by means of this wisdom, our soul is strengthened and comforted in certitude of hope, as he who receives a formal promise of payment feels certain that he will be paid.

S. Jerome says on this subject: 'Although a man may be holy and perfect and everyone may consider he is worthy of eternal glory, he has as yet only received the pledge of it. The relish of spiritual things given by the Holy Ghost as a security of eternal life ought not to be called a temporal payment, for I do not believe that temporal things come down from heaven from whence descends every perfect gift, but that payment for what is of this world is made in the things of this world, and God sends a foretaste of heaven as a promise of his glory. The latter may also be a refreshing breakfast for those who are toiling in God's service, or, as it were, a drop of honey taken by the rod of the cross from the honeycomb of eternal bliss to invigorate those who fight, and to sustain those who are among the lions and bestial impulses in the den of this mortal body.'

In order to understand that the spiritual foretaste God affords the soul is a pledge of future glory, you must notice that parchasers are accustomed to give the vendor earnest money of their bargain. This is not done in the spiritual purchase, for God does not give credit nor deliver at once the whole of what he sells, which is, as S. Augustine says, the kingdom of heaven. This you must buy with good works performed now, for those to come are of little value unless they include the former. God is said in Holy Scripture to feed the young ravens,[2] yet the (spiritual) raven is blamed as being black and much given to making promises to which God does not listen, though he listens to its young ones with white feathers which betoken the good works of sinners cleansed by repentance and carried into practice. Although God will give eternal happiness to many who are now sinners, this will

[1] In Spanish 'wisdom' is *sabiduria* and 'taste' or 'relish' *sabor*, resembling the Latin *sapientia* and *sapor*.

[2] Ps. cxlvi, 9.

not be until after they have performed the good actions requisite. God does not care for future good deeds, and if he accepts them it is not for their own sake, for they are nothing, but on account of the goodwill they show now, which has some value.[1]

You have seen how God sells for immediate payment, and I think you will learn by frequent experience that he does not deliver his merchandise (which is heaven) at once. He will never give it to you during this mortal life, for then you would not give more money of good works to buy an increase of glory, because if once you beheld eternal bliss, you would be so intoxicated and enraptured by the sight of God that you would not wish to toil or seek or merit more, seeing that this sufficed and was worth more than all the world for man. Therefore the Lord, zealous for our well-being, does not give us eternal glory now, in order that, by serving him longer, we may deserve in his merciful sight to receive greater glory. Yet he gives a pledge of this heavenly bliss to his intimate friends like a honeycomb which though it does not contain all the honey, yields a drop of it.

Holy Scripture calls eternal glory a honeycomb because the latter contains three things: the wax which gives us light and corresponds to the Beatific Vision; the honey which nourishes us which is an image of fruition; and the comb and its cells which symbolizes not only the heavenly mansions but continuity of bliss, because the honey is contained in the cells, and wastes if they are broken. The drop of honey from this sweetest honeycomb is the relish and sweetness of devotion, given by the Lord to those who please him, or who deserve or ask for it, for he says: 'Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you.'[2] But it must be noticed that the pledge of eternal life makes us the more certain that God, on his part, will deliver all for which he has constituted himself our Debtor. He sells us his infinite glory at an almost worthless price, but strengthens our confidence that we shall receive it; he awakens the longing with which he desires us to seek what is so sublime, yet modifies its sweetness and cools the burning fire of love and incredible yearning that this sweetness incites. On this point S. Ambrose says: 'Let us contract a sacred ambition so that, not content with the commonplace, we may aspire to and pant after the most sublime.'

[1] S. Teresa writes: 'God does not want our deeds but the love that prompts them.'

[2] S. Matt. vii, 7.

CHAPTER IV

WHY AN INTERIOR RELISH FOR SPIRITUAL THINGS IS GIVEN US

I WISH to bring forward one reason to prove that the relish for heavenly things is not given as a temporal reward which is not to be followed by eternal happiness. The reason is that such a temporal payment, followed by privation of an eternal recompense, is only mentioned in Holy Scripture as bestowed on those who say: 'What portion have we in David? or what inheritance in the son of Isai?'[1] When they despise the lot of the house of David, they despise eternal blessedness, and by contemning the inheritance of the son of Isai, they contemn Christ's favours, including people who receive them. Of such men as these, the Blessed Trinity says in the words of Isaias: 'Let us have pity on the wicked, but he will not learn justice: in the land of the saints he hath done wicked things, and he shall not see the glory of the Lord.'[2]

God shows mercy on the evil-doer when he gives him even a temporal reward, for he does not deserve even that; and since earthly rewards attract men to the earth from which they were drawn, God declares that such a man will not learn to do right, for, being evil himself, he makes evil use even of what is good. As, while in the land of the saints, that is, the Church of God, he commits sin, he, with his unclean heart, will never see God's glory, but is repaid in this manner for his insignificant and imperfect services. But this glory is beheld by the just through the delights of contemplation, for their hearts are cleansed from all mundane cares. If God should choose to pay anyone by enabling him to relish celestial things and by bestowing on him the gift of devotion, such a reward would be an opportunity afforded by the Lord for the soul to enter into a covenant with him and to aim at eternal riches. Allured by this spiritual sweetness, it would seek how to obtain it constantly, casting aside all else, and the means being no other than obedience to the divine commands, would submit to them at once and say to God with David: 'I have inclined my heart to do thy justifications for ever, for the reward.'[3] As the kingdom of heaven may be bought, as I said, the treasure is purchased in this way.[4]

[1] 3 Kings xii, 16. [2] Isa. xxvi, 10. [3] Ps. cxviii, 112.

[4] S. Teresa teaches that God sometimes gives consolations to entice the 'imperfect to prepare themselves for more and that he grants them when, how, and to whom he wills—the goods are his and he wrongs no one' (*Castle*, iv, ch. i).

I own and verily believe that many sinners are converted by this desire for the divine sweetness. How good it is and how the saints commend it, will be explained in the proper place. But I also hold that God never gives it in payment to those who will go to hell, but he rewards them with bodily pleasures, riches, and worldly honours. Not that I deny that God could do so, for nothing is impossible to him. I also think that many souls are lost which were formerly his friends while they were in a state of grace and charity, and that they often received great spiritual consolations, though these favours were not given them as payment for their services. I should not believe they were unless Holy Scripture affirmed it. Yet the question is doubtful. But if his Majesty has determined to send me to hell, as my numberless sins deserve, I beg of him, if he does make use of such a manner of payment with anyone, to use it with me also, so that I may rejoice at least for a time in his holy love to which he earnestly invites the devout heart of man.

It is absurd to say that one in mortal sin can enjoy the sweets of contemplation ; he might possess any of the other gifts except charity, which, as S. Paul says, alone saves the soul, so that without it the rest are of no account.[1] Therefore let this not cause misgivings in the contemplative more than in any other good Christian, but let him answer that, with the exception of charity, nothing is more incompatible with mortal sin than the spiritual taste which is most sweet and delightful to those who fear him.

To return to the first part of the second word of this Letter. He who, without any effort of his own, receives from the Lord the double spirit asked for by Eliseus,[2] understands the grace he has been granted, for with the grace bestowed on his will he is also given light in the intellect by which to comprehend it : this is, at it were, a double spirit. But if you only receive the single spirit, which is the grace alone, you must study the subject carefully from experience, comparing one grace with the other by reasonable conjectures and consideration : these must vary according to the diverse graces which Jesus Christ grants you. Do not be surprised at my saying *diverse* graces, for I knew a man who for a whole year received a new kind of grace every day from God, although he was not given to understand each favour which was bestowed on him in a secret manner, like seed concealed in a melon and placed by God stealthily in the depth of his heart or laid in his mouth without his knowing anything of it but the taste. Evidently, if he had carefully examined these favours, he

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. [2] 4 Kings ii, 9.

would naturally have acquired great experience in spiritual matters. This is of the greatest benefit and advantage not only for its possessor but for the whole Church, because it helps and comforts many souls under spiritual temptations, doubts, and weariness caused by the devil.

To show the utility of such experience I will give you an example. I knew someone who, to console a person who was possessed, though he had never himself had a devil, told the demoniac at a time when he was not being tempted, all that the demon did to him ; what his incitements were, and how he treated his victim's soul. The possessed man said that it was all perfectly true. Yet no revelation had been made either by God or the devil to his friend, who, merely by remembering the spiritual operations of grace which he had often experienced and comparing, deducing, and contrasting one thing with the other, by mere conjecture told the possessed what he had undergone from the evil one.

My advice on this point is that, as the favours vary greatly you should consider them attentively and examine the occasions on which they took place exactly, noticing what happened and the effects produced and comparing one with the other. Sometimes you will fear what is good, as Herod feared S. John, whose name signifies *grace*. From lack of experience you will sometimes dread a grace you ought to love. At other times you will mistake a lesser grace for a great one and undervalue what is more important. Again, you will set high value on what is of no account. But do not be afraid ; there is no sin in this unless your intention is faulty. As a very holy man said, if the devil makes you believe a thing is good which is not good, his deception will soon be discovered ; for as S. Paul says : ' God is faithful,'[1] and will not let your mistake last long. Nor will it be a very dangerous one, for the soul soon detects the truth more or less fully, and the good advice given you will help you greatly, as I will explain.

Meanwhile, remember this : when you feel that a grace is being granted your soul, do not at the time give way to curiosity about what it is, or examine it, but open your heart to the divine gift, cleansing it as far as possible from the dust of wandering thoughts, and welcome the interior grace with all the love of your heart, so that if it were such as to kill you, yet you would not fear to lose your bodily life for its sake. There will often be need of this, such is our weakness and the immense power of God. But do not hesitate to enter into the depths ; though you may feel fear,

[1] 1 Cor. x, 13.

do not give way to it, and if to attain to this grace you have to pass through fire, feel no dread. Be not terrified though it may seem that you must annihilate yourself; the more you die to self, the better, for you will find your soul has gained though your body is appalled. Consent to whatever comes to you during interior prayer, for it is from the hand of God. As I said, do not at the time try to understand what these graces are or what is their effect, but be confident; otherwise, if you look into them, you will lose what God is giving you, for as the Canticle says,[1] he does not wish you to turn your eyes on it to comprehend it, but to turn your hands to it to embrace it, your heart to love it, your ears to obey it, your mouth to taste it, and your body and soul to receive it.

None of these genuine graces comes to the soul without leaving strong signs of whom it comes from, which remain in the soul for at least a day, and these 'remnants of the peaceable man'[2] have different effects on the soul. At one time they cause a great calm and love for solitude; at another they enable the mind to understand and explain sublime matters; again, they cause such great joy that the smile of the Lord never leaves the heart. It may happen that they open the founts of the eyes which are filled from the fountains of the Saviour, or they may incite the soul to thanksgiving or deprive the body of the wish for food and imprint in the heart the memory of God and a contempt for all fleeting things. At other times the residue of grace awakens such a love for others in the soul that it rejoices in its neighbour's well-being as though it were its own, and grieves in a like way for his sufferings.

Why should I say more? I will only tell you that the virtues implanted by this multiform grace are so genuine that, after it has ceased to operate, favours received at other times seem false or dead, or sketches made in charcoal by comparison.

CHAPTER V

OF THE THIRD WORD OF THIS LETTER

IT is very expedient to add to the former two words the third, which is that you should rectify all your actions so that the words of the prophet may apply to you: 'He shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and

[1] Cant. vi. [2] Ps. xxxvi, 37.

shall refine them as gold, and as silver, and they shall offer sacrifices to the Lord in justice.'[1] Before you are established in the repose of contemplation with the forge of your conscience heated by the love of God and kindled by the breath of the Holy Spirit, there are four things that you must do.[2] You must build up or fashion : cleanse and purge and pass through anguish of mind in your work : you must perfect your present actions and your speech and refine your thoughts. For if you become such as you should and must be considering the grace you receive from the Lord, you will find many imperfections in all these things, and if you cast these away and refine all your interior and exterior acts, you will be able to offer God numerous sacrifices in your manner of life, justice and sanctity.

You ought to be firm in maintaining more rectitude in your intentions, your virtues should be more perfect and your actions performed more purely for God. Let your love be more purified from self-love, your words rectified from what harms your neighbour, your thoughts freed from stain, and your devotional feelings deepened. The latter must be more habitual and confirmed, so that you do not change nor doubt without good reason, for though it is foolish to believe without evidence, it is a severe detriment to be slow in believing, a fault that injures many souls. It is very blameable that a man should rebel against the light and mistrust the grace given him, putting no trust in God. This causes some people to examine closely into the divine consolations in a manner that is excessive. If you wish to take a middle course, examine your interior conduct as regards God and your exterior as regards men. On this point S. Gregory says : ' The animals seen by the prophet were said to have eyes within and without. He who disposes his exterior actions well and neglects his interior, has eyes without but not within. The saints, as they pay attention to their outward actions so as to give a good example to their brethren, and vigilantly watch over their soul so that it may appear blameless before the eyes of him who judges in secret, are said to possess eyes within and without.' After making this examination, contemplatives should feel confident. God commanded that the ark should precede the people to guide them. God ordered that it should be carried at a distance of two cubits in front of the people,

[1] Mal. iii, 3.

[2] ' The love of God does not consist in tears, nor in sweetness and tenderness which we for the most part desire, and with which we console ourselves ; but rather in serving him in justice, fortitude, and humility ' (*Life*, ch. xi, 20).

meaning by this that people have two claims to consider—those of the active and the contemplative life. Thus, as Richard says, we can direct our mind and will rightly in all our actions, letting a discreet examination go before them as a pillar of fire. If you wish to learn how necessary discretion is in the spiritual life, read Chapter LXX of Richard's *Benjamin minor*, and you will realize the need for a man to examine, understand, and perfect all his deeds.

SIXTH TREATISE

SPEAKS OF RECOLLECTION, SAYING: 'FREQUENTLY PRACTISE RECOLLECTION SO AS TO TRAIN YOURSELF IN ITS USE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

IMITATE OUR LORD IN THE DESERT BY RECOLLECTION AND DETACHMENT

AS the Satirist says, there are a thousand kinds of men; each makes a different use of things that exist; it is evident by their different characters and aspirations that their aims are diverse, and that, as Isaias says: 'Every one hath turned aside into his own way.'[2] I am not speaking of the wicked who make it their business to invent new kinds of crimes for which the Lord seeks novel modes of punishment, for we know that the chastisement suits the offence and the special pleasure it afforded.

Setting aside this evil, which the wise man says is common to mankind, we find that among the righteous some incline, like S. Paul, to suffer excessive toils and trials;[3] others, like Solomon, meditate in detail on the pains of hell, which greatly afflicts the flesh spiritually; some, like Martha, serve the poor and perform works of mercy;[4] or visit the sad and the afflicted, like Eliseus,[5] or go on pilgrimages to holy places; while some fast like the disciples of S. John the Baptist.[6] Although these practices and others of the same kind are excellent, our Letter advises those who wish to make further progress and follow better things to accustom themselves to recollection, for they will thus imitate and follow our Lord, whose custom it was to go into the desert, where, alone and recollected, he could pray more secretly and spiritually to his and our heavenly Father.

No doubt our Lord could raise his most pure and sacred hands better than did Moses, at all times and in every place; nor did

[1] The sixth treatise, the Letter F, gives *Frequenta el recogimiento por ensayarte en su uso.*

[2] Isa. liii, 6. [3] 2 Cor. xi. [4] S. Luke x, 40.
[5] 4 Kings iv. [6] Matt. ix, 14

he need to withdraw from men who was always farther apart from sinners in his life than are the heavens from the earth. He needed not this in order to live on earth as do the angels who require no solitude to pray, nor are they hindered by the great matters in which they are employed, or the vile sins they witness, or any other thing, but they pray continually and are perfectly recollected in God. This is much more fitting for the only-begotten Son of our God, who, as S. John tells us, dwells in the bosom of the Father,[1] from which sacred retreat he never withdrew even as Man, but ever dwelt there in such peace of soul and tranquillity that he could quote the words of the prophet: 'I am the Lord, and I change not.'[2]

Mortals change their mind not twelve, but twelve hundred times a day, but Christ our Redeemer, while remaining unmoved in his divine purpose, changed and ruled the world, concentrating himself as fully on the one transaction as on the other, holding his heart in unity, like a point which lacks parts because it is indivisible, whereas we divide into as many parts as the cares we own. Our Lord was not so affected: one care gave him no more trouble than another, for however numerous, they did not disturb nor surcharge the heart united to God. Yet he, who became man not for his own sake but for ours, sought not to live for himself but for us, and so performed his most sacred actions that, as though looking on a mount of sublime perfection, we might follow his example and gaze on what he taught us no less by his example than by his teaching. For this purpose, it was needful, not for him but for us, that he should depart into the desert to pray to induce us to follow him there—I do not say for forty days, but for forty years—into the desert of divine contemplation, detached from all that is created.

Hence this Letter directs: 'Frequently practise recollection in order to train yourself in its use.' I mean to speak of two matters. Firstly, the name given to this practice in the *Third Alphabet*; secondly, of how it must be frequented in order to train oneself to its use.

Obviously names should be suited to their objects; they are so used by learned men who understand their syllogisms and terms. This is important as regards understanding the objects for names express much of their character. Therefore those desirous of learning any science should pay much attention to the terms used in it. To understand the reason why they are used will lay a firm foundation for future comprehension of the matter.

[1] S. John i, 18. [2] Mal. iii, 6.

Besides this, some things are too excellent and have too many qualities to be expressed in less than several terms, as we see in great personages who, the more numerous their dignities are, the more titles and coats of arms do they add to them to make them known. This is exemplified in S. John the Baptist, one of the greatest saints, who is called by the Holy Scriptures precursor, light, angel, man, a shining light, as well as many other names.

Our Lady has so many titles that they can hardly be numbered, on account of her great worth which can scarcely be realized even by any of the angels.

Christ our Redeemer has so many names on account of his different attributes and virtues that Scripture is full of them, yet they hardly suffice to designate his glory which fills heaven and earth.

CHAPTER II

THE NAMES OF THIS SPIRITUAL EXERCISE

On account of the excellence of this spiritual exercise which I have explained, it has many names both in Holy Scripture and in the writings of the saints and learned theologians. Some call it mystic (that is to say, hidden) theology, because it is taught in the secret hiding-place of the heart by the good Teacher Jesus, who chooses to reserve this mastership for himself.[1] He gives his servants less share and skill in imparting this than in any other science, wishing, as the chief Master, to keep the chief of all teaching for himself. For among the sciences, Theology is queen and mistress, and as the wise man says,[2] she calls all the other sciences as her handmaids to the fortress of the Faith to serve her as their mistress. Theology is of two kinds: one is called speculative or analytic (which is the same thing); the other hidden, and it is the latter which is explained in, and which gives the title of this *Third Alphabet*. Not that I presume to teach it, for no mortal has ever done that, because Christ has kept for himself the work of teaching in secret the hearts in which he dwells this hidden theology as a divine science far surpassing the other—called speculative. That

[1] Speaking of the *Pater noster*, S. Teresa says: 'Do you suppose God is silent, though we cannot hear him? He speaks to our hearts when our hearts speak to him. . . . This Master is never so far off that his scholars need raise their voices to make him hear: he keeps very close to them' (*Camino*, xxiv, 4).

[2] Prov. ix, 3.

of which we speak does not wish to scrutinize, knowing that it is written that 'He who is a searcher of majesty, shall be overwhelmed by glory.'[1] According to Gerson, this theology is more perfect or better than the other, of which it makes use as a beginning and steps to mount the ladder of love.

God teaches us the former theology in order that we may contemplate him as supreme Truth, but the latter, presupposing this, of which it has no doubt, passes on to love him as the supreme Good. The first pertains to the understanding, since even the devils have much light concerning the faith, for it is written: 'The devils also believe and tremble.'[2] But mystic theology concerns the will that is enamoured of the supreme God, and is proper to God's devout lovers. The first theology will perish with faith when vision takes the place of faith as its reward, but the latter will perfect itself by more ardent love and will no longer be hidden but manifest to all, little and great.

Speculative theology makes use of reasons, arguments, dissertation, and probabilities as do other sciences; hence it is called scholastic theology—that of learned men. It can only be mastered by those who are clever, and requires books and time and constant work and vigils under a competent master, as do the other sciences. But the mystic theology of which we treat is acquired rather by devout affection and the exercise of the moral virtues which incline the soul to it while cleansing it, besides the theological virtues which illuminate and the gifts of the Holy Ghost, also the evangelical beatitudes which perfect it according to the three hierarchical acts which purge, enlighten, and perfect. As often happens, even in animals and still more frequently in men, where there is less knowledge, there is more affection and love. We see this in children, who love their parents the more, the less they know of them, and in novices, who at first, or during the first year, are more devout, with all their simplicity, than they are afterwards as theologians.

From what has been said, to attain this most sublime theology deep science need not be sought or won by toil, though infused science must not be lacking, nor does it lack those who dispose themselves to receive it. For when once we have learned by faith that God is altogether to be desired and loved and is wholly love, if our affection is purged and prepared and exercised, I know not how the soul shall be hindered from being transformed, inflamed, and raised to him whom it knows to be but one mass, one fragment, or rather, one fount of love.

[1] Prov. xxv, 27. [2] S. James ii, 19.

Evidently, as both a Doctor of the Church and commonsense teach us, those are mistaken who continually read or recite vocal prayers, or seek for devout phrases uttered by others, if they think that by these means they will attain to this holy practice, which consists solely in affections and interior movements of the heart. Doutless such exercises are useful, but they do not suffice, for though they may incite some devotion at the time, yet if the book or vocal prayer is relinquished, it is soon forgotten and the devotion at once departs, and will only return with the use of the book or prayers which promoted it. Yet if we must do without either speculative or mystic contemplation, it is unspeakably better to possess the latter, because tender affection and devotion for the Lord are more desirable than an acute and cold-hearted understanding gained by enlightened study, which is possessed by heretics and devils. Yet if man could have them both, it would be like having two right hands, or two golden hands, one of them decorated with precious jewels. You must know that when the intelligence of the soul, which is the highest of its powers of knowledge, passes into love for what it contemplates, it, so to say, rises above itself. This goes by the name, in books, of one's rising above oneself, or of a transport, or the soul's rising above itself or above its spirit, as you will find in many writings.[1]

Take as an example some small vessel containing water or any other liquid which boils on being set upon the fire. When it bubbles and boils, it seems, in a manner, unable to contain itself, for the liquor which was quiet seems raised above itself by the heat. So the soul not yet inflamed by the loving ardour of mystic theology, knowing nothing except what it has learnt from speculative theology, seems to lie still and to be contained within itself, but when it conceives the spirit of love in fervour of heart, it, in a certain manner, rises above itself, leaping or boiling up. Thus it may be said that what was, when only in the mind and intelligence, knowledge and speculative theology is now called wisdom, which is a delicious knowledge and mystic theology—knowledge, because it knows the truth, and delight because it has risen to a love of goodness. Therefore the second theology is often added to the first, as the boiling water originates in the cold water. At

[1] 'They say that the soul enters into itself or rises above itself. I do not know how to explain anything clearly by such language' (*Castle*, M. iv, ch. iii). 'How this which we call union is effected and what it is I cannot tell. Mystical theology explains it, and I do not know the terms of that science; nor can I understand what the mind is, nor how it differs from the soul or spirit either: all three seem to me but one' (*Life*, xviii, 4).

least, mystical theology is always founded on faith, which is the special mistress of true speculative theology.

This kind of prayer is also called sweetness because it is a sweet wisdom which S. Paul says is only spoken of among the perfect,[1] for such delicious food and high doctrine are not given to the imperfect. S. Paul calls it wisdom (or relish), because by its means men taste God.[2] Therefore the wise man says: 'God hath given to a man that is good in his sight . . . wisdom.'[3]

This manner of prayer is also called the art of love, because by love alone can it be obtained, and love is increased by it more than by any other art or effort; also because Christ, the God of love, teaches it to loving hearts. Often skill vanquishes those who cannot be conquered by force, as David defeated Goliath more by skill than by strength and elephants are conquered by the artifice of hunters, weak in themselves. Therefore this exercise is called an art by which weaklings vanquish the Almighty, binding him with fetters and manacles of love and saying with the bride: 'I held him: and I will not let him go.'[4]

It is also termed union, for when man attains to God in this manner, he becomes one spirit with him by an interchange of wills, so that neither does man will aught but what God wills, nor does God draw apart from man's will, but they are at one in all ways, like things that are perfectly united, which, as it were, lose their own natures and become wholly transformed into a third.[5]

Consequently, the man is at unity with himself and his fellows. If we were all so, the multitude of the faithful would be one soul and heart united in the Holy Ghost, who was produced by the

[1] 1 Cor. ii, 6.

[2] *Ibid.* 12. *E dicese sabiduria porque mediante ella saben los hombres a que sabe Dios.* This seems almost impossible to render in English in its double meaning.

[3] Eccles. ii, 26. [4] Cant. iii, 4.

[5] S. Teresa describes the prayer of union as consisting 'in so close a union with the will of God that there is no longer any division between him and the soul, but their will is one. . . . The soul only realizes that this is the keenest delight that can be felt in this life, even if all the world's happiness could be enjoyed at once. The soul feels that it has been strengthened and benefited without understanding how it has merited such a boon. It has been taught great truths without seeing its Teacher, and has been conformed in virtue and caressed by him who has the power to do so. It can compare this to nothing but the endearments of a mother who tenderly loves her child and feeds and fondles it' (*Concept.* ch. iv and v. This state of prayer is described in M. v of the *Castle,* chs. xv–xviii; of the *Life;* and xxxi of the *Camino,* etc.)

union of the Father and the Son as First Principle, and who makes us all one in love that he may beget us in grace and bring us as one body to God,[1] that he may not have to bring us to him one by one.

This exercise is also called profundity, which includes obscurity and depth, for it is founded on the depth and profundity of man's heart which is obscure—that is, bereft of human understanding—so that the Spirit of God may move over the darkness of the waters of its desires and say: 'Be light made.'[2]

CHAPTER III

OTHER NAMES APPROPRIATE TO RECOLLECTION[3]

THIS exercise is also termed in Holy Scripture concealment, because then God hides himself in the hidden depth of man's heart, for, spiritually speaking, even now Christ hides from his brethren, as he calls souls devoted to him, lest they should grow proud on account of being in his company. Yet as he does not wish them to be in need of him, he conceals himself in the house or temple in which they are. In this concealment the heavenly Father finds what best pleases him, and to this hiddenness, the doors of the senses being fast shut, the Lord comes and tells the mysterious secret of his occult friendship, as Job declares.[4] He that is least on account of his humility best hides himself in this secret place and escapes from the hand of Abimelech, that is, the devil. Nowhere can we conceal ourselves better from him than within ourselves, where we shall find the powerful David, the eternal God who chooses to secrete himself in the stable of our conscience within the crib of our heart, where he himself will hide us in the secret of his face, that is, the hidden knowledge and vision attained there.

[1] Throughout her works S. Teresa strenuously insists on love for our fellow-men as the outcome and evidence of love for God and union with him, and that the two are in proportion with, and increase with one another.

[2] Gen. i, 2, 3.

[3] Professor Allison Peers comments: The very much wider range of the Spanish verb *recoger* than the English 'recollect' makes it impossible to bring out the full force of this passage; the Spanish means among other things to 'gather in,' 'harvest,' 'protect,' 'shelter,' 'withdraw,' 'take back,' and some of these connotations it has, as will be seen, above; especially is it difficult to translate the last example of *recoger*, except by 'uniting.'

[4] Job iv.

Recollection is also called abstinence, for he who wishes to practise it must abstain not only from such sins as impurity, but even from all human love and from the comfort he might lawfully receive from creatures. He must also deny himself as regards the intellect, for, according to S. Paul: 'Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things.'[1] Then how much more should he do so who strives to master himself, abstaining from all thought which would inflame the heart or rob it of its control and interior concentration. In fact, recollection requires that a man should refrain from all appearance of evil, as S. Paul says.[2]

Recollection is also termed drawing near, for by this exercise the true Jacob draws near God[3] to be touched and blessed by him. This approach is swift, for leaving creatures, we come to the Lord in haste, as though running to cast ourselves into his arms which we see open to receive us. Thus Moses drew near God on the heights of the mountain of contemplation while waiting to hear him speak.[4]

It is also called a fire, by which the faggots of our hearts are inflamed with love for the Lord of which he himself said: 'I am come to cast fire on the earth; and what will I but that it be kindled?'[5] The wind with which this flame must be kindled is this holy exercise, which is also termed a girdle, for not only must the loins of purity and chastity be cinctured, but the breasts must also be bound to repress evil desires and looseness of thought.[6]

Recollection is also called a reception, for thereby we advance with eager desire, opening wide our heart and emptying it to give place to God.

Another title for it is consent, for those who oppose God in other ways, by this means consent to all he wishes and overcome an interior opposition and rebellion against God of which they are conscious. They are even burdensome to themselves, as Job declares: 'Why hast thou set me opposite to thee, and I am become burdensome to myself?'[7] The answer made to him was that he should submit to God and that he would have peace and bear good fruit.

Recollection is also termed the caul and the fat of the liver which should rightly be offered for ever to God as the 'food of the fire' to burn the sacrifices,[8] for this exercise greatly strengthens and improves all others. God commands that no one should eat this

[1] 1 Cor. ix, 25.
[2] 1 Thess. v, 22.
[3] Gen. xxvii.
[4] Exod. xx.
[5] S. Luke xii, 49.
[6] Apoc. i.
[7] Job vii, 20.
[8] Lev iii.

caul,[1] for he whose soul, like David's, is filled with marrow and fatness, should render thanks to God who gave them.[2]

Recollection also goes by the name of attraction, for we can attract God with it, for as the vacuum attracts what fills it, so the heart empty of worldly things attracts God, who occupies it and supplies what is lacking.[3] For the same reason recollection is defined as occupation, for it fills the heart and breast.

It is styled adoption, for here Esther (that is, the soul in its poverty) is adopted by Mardochai,[4] who represents Christ. Being subject and obedient to him in all things, the child at once begins to enjoy its father's riches, and those who practise recollection begin to enjoy God's sweetness now.

It is also termed the coming of the Lord into the soul, for by this means he visits his own who call on him by their sighs.

It is named a height which raises the soul, and a friendship opening the devout heart to the heart of Christ.

And it is styled a spiritual ascension with Christ and a captivity by which we subject our understanding to him.

Also it is a third heaven to which contemplatives are uplifted.

But why should I say more ? This exercise is a refuge to which we should retreat when tempests rage around ; it is a continual resistance against the prince of the powers of darkness who secretly assails us ; it is a restitution we make to God, giving him unreservedly all that we find within us that is his. It is a resurrection to spiritual life wherein power is given to the just over the heaven of his soul and the earth of his body ; it is a constant reverence towards God by which we stand in holy fear before him ; it is a tree bearing roses of virtues ; it is the kingdom of God which we must gain by violence and by art, for we have it within us and daily pray for it ; it is a royal priesthood by which, having the mastery over ourselves, we may offer ourselves to God. It is a silence in the heaven of our soul, though brief, and not lasting as the devout man desires ; it is a service that we render to God alone, adoring solely his Majesty ; it is a seat we hold ready for him that he may stay in our interior house ; it is a tent for the wanderer in the desert ; it is a strong watch-tower of our defence, from which we must keep guard on heavenly matters, and a golden vessel for the manna in the ark of our heart ; it is

[1] Lev. iii, [2] Ps. lxii, 6.

[3] ' Without doubt, if we empty ourselves of all that belongs to the creature, depriving ourselves of it for the love of God, that same God will fill us with himself ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. ii).

[4] Esth. ii, 7.

a valley in which the richest wheat abounds ; and a victory which overcomes our lesser world, subjecting it entirely to God ; it is a vineyard we must tend with vigilance, the shadow of him whom we desire, where we taste his fruit ;[1] it is the unction of the Holy Ghost which teaches all things[2] and the garden enclosed on all sides, the key of which we give to God alone that he may enter when he chooses.

Why should I say more ? I think I have said something, yet it is as nothing compared with what is deserved by this holy exercise, which is of such high value that the names I have given it hardly express its excellence, and it is so necessary for man that though all cannot be told, by no means must it be left unmentioned, lest those who know of it should be accused of ill-will. Therefore, though its excellence may seem to impose silence, the need which cries for knowledge of it may force them to speak.

One who had received this wisdom and sweet savour of which we spoke, strove thus to describe it : ' I preferred her ' (Wisdom) ' before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison of her. Neither did I compare her unto any precious stone : for all gold in comparison of her, is as a little sand, and silver in respect of her shall be counted as clay. And I loved her above health and beauty, and chose to have her instead of light : for her light cannot be put out. Now all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands, and I rejoiced in all these : for this wisdom went before me, and I knew not that she was the mother of them all. Which I have learned without guile, and communicate without envy, and her riches I hide not. For she is an infinite treasure to men : which they that use become the friends of God.'[3]

He who ponders these words well may, to some extent, perceive the value of this exercise and that the names I gave it only refer to those parts of Holy Scripture in which, in a hidden manner, it is praised in order that we may practise it. I will not explain these names at length lest I should weary the readers, but I will discuss them later on, though I do not think that anyone will be able to follow my meaning unless he has, to a certain extent, practised the exercise.

To make clear what I have said, I think that the most suitable term, and the one which explains it best, is recollection. As I said, recollection is called by several names by learned men and in Holy Scripture by those I enumerated, but there is no title about which they will so universally agree as this of recollection,

[1] Cant. ii, 3. [2] 1 John ii, 20. [3] Wisdom vii, 8–14.

which exactly suits this holy exercise whose office is to collect and congregate what is dispersed.

In ancient times men often practised this exercise and retired into hermitages and secret places to recollect themselves better and be freed from the distractions of company. But now we only retain the name, which we give to peaceful and quiet persons we meet, whom we say are recollected, though we hardly mean more than that they are thoughtful and retiring and well behaved. Though all this is good, it is not good enough to deserve the name of recollection according to its true and original meaning that was almost the equivalent of the word union, which we use not so much as regards its human and material as in its divine and spiritual sense. Yet, not insisting on its literal meaning, union is a suitable term for all the aspects of our exercises which tend strongly to bring man to close intimacy with God. We will explain why the term recollection suits this exercise better than do the rest.

Evidently this word signifies either many things united to one another or one thing which could be divided but is not; these could in a manner be called collected together. If the matter of which we speak is so excellent that it cannot be wholly expressed either by one or several terms, yet that name is best which includes the greater number of names or meanings. This is the case with the word recollection, which includes every name I have given, for they may all to a certain extent be reduced to this, which contains all their perfections.

Setting aside the details which are more a matter of curiosity than of practical use, you must note that this exercise is styled recollection. Firstly because it collects together those who practise it, making them of one heart and mind and doing away with dissensions and ill-will. But this is not enough; it has the marvellous and well-known characteristic of moving a man to devotion when he finds his neighbour practises it, of which the former is conscious as though he saw something very favourable to some important business of his own, so that he at once returns to himself and recollects himself in God, much to his own surprise. This happens to those who have themselves practised recollection and have reason to believe their friend has done so. But what is more, this sometimes occurs to persons when they are not aware at the time that the other person has practised this exercise.

This seems prefigured in Joseph, who was greatly moved by seeing Benjamin, who was born of the same mother, but not by the sight of his other brothers who had another mother. In the

same way, though all Christians are brethren spiritually, they have not the feeling I spoke of for those who do not practise this exercise.

CHAPTER IV

OF OTHER KINDS OF RECOLLECTION

THE second reason for calling this exercise recollection is that as regards the exterior, it recalls the man to himself, for clearly he is divided into as many parts as the interests he is engaged in, which are like the brambles that prick the grazing lamb until they draw blood. But as I have often witnessed, when a man begins to enjoy recollection, he unifies his mode of life, setting aside or lessening works that distract him, and so modifies them that with a little management he can become recollected. Preachers who practise this holy exercise, after the labours of Lent cease to give so many sermons in order to collect their cares and draw nearer to God—not for the sake of amusement or bodily rest but to nourish their soul, for they are like the man who waits at table, who feeds others while he starves himself—and God grant they may make a meal after they have rested and not content themselves with the mouthful or two they took before !

Thirdly, this exercise re-collects under the sway of reason the sensitive nature which before had gone somewhat astray and become disorderly. Holy recollection goes forth to meet it, bidding it, as the angel bade Agar, to return to its mistress the reason, and humble itself under her hand.[1]

Fourthly, to practise this exercise is to be led to withdraw to solitude, like Isaac who went into the fields to meditate, or like Elias who ascended the mountain and fled from the multitude. Hence this exercise at once incites a man to withdraw from society and bustle and to dwell in retired places, which he rarely leaves, or if he does, he returns to his retreat through his longing for recollection. He loves the practice as well as ever, and feels as much out of his element without it as the eel which wriggles out of the fisherman's hands to go back to the water.

In connection with these signs, which are found in those who really love this holy exercise, many beginners feel a temptation to become hermits and to change their mode of living with this object. I merely advise them first to consider their character and condition of life.

Fifthly, this exercise causes the senses to become recollected.

[1] Gen. xvi, 9.

Recollected persons take no pleasure in news and idle talk or in speech on any subject except turning the heart to God. They withdraw their eyes from what is around and lower them, taking no pleasure in outward sights, for they wish to gaze on God in their heart.[1] It is evident at once that they refrain their tongue and prefer silence, and that speech is a burden to them. In order to re-collect their senses, they love to be in the dark, and close the shutters of their room to prevent their eyes from wandering.

The sixth thing that this holy exercise re-collects is the members of the body, for it is wonderful to see one whose body was uncontrolled but yesterday, whose feet were restless, whose hands were swift to fence, whose head constantly turned from side to side, and whose body was never quiet, but now sitting, now standing, looking about and inquiring the time and what kind of weather it was ; now in one place, and a minute after somewhere else—yet two days after he took to this exercise, he is so recollected, so mortified, so completely amended by it, that it is a mercy for which to thank God.

It should be noted here by those who practise this exercise that sometimes, when the recollection is very deep, it draws the faculties of the mind to it ; the body seems greatly contracted towards the chest, and the limbs, to a great extent, lose their strength, so that sometimes, for a while, they are not under control and cannot be moved. This was exemplified in the case of a poor simple man who earned his daily bread as a labourer, yet was amply fed with spiritual food and greatly given to this exercise. One day while in church, he was absorbed in this way and fell to the ground. Some persons present, moved by compassion, went to lift him up, but when he began to return to himself he said : ' Leave me alone : you are harming me ; it is as though you were holding a bird's wings to stop it from flying.' This man

[1] Speaking of recollection, S. Teresa tells her nuns that they must realize that God dwells within them and remain there with him. ' It is called recollection because by its means the soul collects together all the faculties and enters within itself to be with God. . . . Those who are able thus to enclose themselves within the little heaven of their souls where dwells the Creator of heaven and earth, and who can accustom themselves not to remain in any place that would preoccupy their exterior senses, may feel sure that they are travelling by an excellent way. . . . The soul, like one who retires into a strong fortress to be out of danger, withdraws the senses from outward things, so thoroughly despising them that the eyes close so as to veil from the sight what is visible in order that the eyes of the soul may see more clearly. Souls are thereby delivered from many occasions of sin and are more easily inflamed by the fire of divine love ' (*Camino*, ch. xxviii, *seq.* ; *Castle*, M. iv, ch. iii, etc.).

was simple and uneducated, but did not lack the wisdom of which we spoke.

Seventhly this exercise gathers together the virtues of the man who practises it. Like the wise man who knew not that wisdom was the mother of all good things, the man whose sole thought is to recollect himself and who has no other care, cannot tell how he thus acquires the virtues almost without an effort, so that he can say with the wise man : ' All good things come to me together with her.' I will explain this more fully later on.

Eighthly it recollects the interior senses of the heart wherein is the glory of the King's daughter ; that is, the Catholic soul. A recollected man may aptly be compared with the tortoise which rolls itself up, caring for nothing that is without.[1] So this exercise is a strong rock which, as the Psalm says, is a refuge for the hedgehogs, who being enclosed within themselves suffer from no outside harm, for they think no ill of those who injure them.

Ninthly the powers of the soul are re-collected to the *synteresis* and highest part of it, where the image of God is imprinted, which is called the spirit of the just and the spirit which asks with groans.[2] There the soul is wholly recollected in the higher supper-room, intent solely on the one thing which has uplifted it to the supreme summit of the mount of God.

There now remains only the tenth manner of re-collecting or gathering together God and the soul—the end for which it has aimed by all its recollection. This truly takes place when the divine Light infuses itself into the soul as into glass or crystal,[3]

[1] Speaking of the prayer of recollection, S. Teresa writes : ' I think I read somewhere that the soul is then like a tortoise or sea-urchin that retreats into itself. Those who said this no doubt understood what they were talking about, but these creatures can retire at will, while here it is not in our power to retire into ourselves unless God gives us the grace ' (*Castle*, M. iv, ch. iii).

[2] ' Interior effects show for certain that there is a positive difference between the soul and the spirit, though they are one with each other. There is an extremely subtle distinction between them so that sometimes they seem to act in a different way from one another, as does the knowledge given to them by God ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iv, 15).

[3] This passage is strongly suggestive of *The Interior Castle* : ' It is very important for us, sisters, that we should not consider our soul to be in darkness ' (*Castle*, vi, viii, 4). Like Osuna, S. Teresa compares God to the sun. This idea is maintained throughout the *Castle*. Speaking of the darkness of the crystal caused by sin, she writes : ' Notice that it is not the fountain and brilliant sun that lose their splendour and beauty, for they are placed in the very centre of the soul and cannot be deprived

sending forth as a Sun the rays of its love and grace that penetrate the heart after having first been received in the highest point of the spirit. This is followed by most perfect recollection which unites and collects together God with the soul and the soul with God. This communication of the soul takes place in God himself in whom it is entirely recollected. It rises like another Jacob to Bethel (which means the house of God), for there God, entering the soul as though it were his own house, and as if he had not the heavens to dwell in, descends upon Mount Bethel to unite himself to the just man who admits no one but him, and is no less eager to dwell (*recogerse*) in God's house than he is to receive God alone into his own home, closing the door upon all others.

There, on the summit of the mountain, God appears working wondrous things, descending upon the altar of the heart, built of stones, which are man's powers, and upon the earth and dust of his thoughts. There the soul changes the name of Jacob, its interior struggle having ceased because the imagination is overcome, and it takes the new name of Israel, which signifies 'one that prevails' on account of its victory over self, for it has won recollection by force, struggled with it as with a man, and risen to the mountain. This also means one who has prevailed over God: which the human spirit accomplishes when it recollects itself completely in him, and is united to him who can in every way console it and promise and bestow great things, as he did to Jacob.

CHAPTER V

THAT WE SHOULD PERSEVERE IN PRACTISING RECOLLECTION

YOU have seen, brother, what this recollection means. But do not lose courage, or fear to practise it; rather 'gird your loins with strength, and strengthen your arm,'[1] that is, make a firm resolution; put out your hands to strong things. Let your fingers take hold of the spindle of which the work is to gather the flax and collect the threads, like this exercise, which collects you and your desires together; therefore I quote these words of our Lord to you: 'He that gathereth not with me, scattereth.'[2]

The chief characteristic of this spiritual exercise is to recollect the heart: this is the highest effect left by grace received by this

of their lustre. The soul is like a crystal in the sunshine over which a thick black cloth has been thrown, so that however brightly the sun may shine, the crystal can never reflect it' (*Castle*, M. i, ch. ii, 3).

[1] Prov. xxxi, 17. [2] Matt. xii, 30.

means in the soul, from which it casts out all superfluous cares and idle thoughts which distract men and drive them outside themselves. Recollection brings them back and calms and pacifies them.

I wish you to be careful to practise it, as our Letter directs, with all possible solicitude and to be most attentive not to act against the inclination which recollection implants in your soul. As a rule this will be that you should withdraw still further into the desert, for it is written that glory is within,[1] to which glory the soul longs to return as to the centre of peace and joy. Do not act against it by opposing its inclination. I repeat this, for by this opposition you would spill much flour by meddling with matters which are of little value compared with what you would lose.

To be clear, you must consider that no one masters an art without much practice, and the more frequently he practises it, the sooner he learns it. Do not be so foolish as not to keep the rules laid down regarding other arts. They are two : the first is that you should learn it with the view of mastering it, not contenting yourself with remaining as a beginner all your life like stupid, listless men who have no sense ; who are always learning yet never reach the knowledge of the truth, such as him of whom it is written : ' This man began to build, and was not able to finish.'[2]

It would be great folly in a man who had to build a house not to aim at finishing it quickly so as to enjoy the reward of his labours soon. If, through negligence, he took many years over the work, men would call him not negligent but a fool for spending all his life in what was not only useless but a loss, an expense, and a labour.

If, brother, you wish to build for your soul the house of recollection, keep to this intention which will help you greatly : you mean to succeed in building it, as the man who learns carpenter's work means to be a carpenter, for afterwards he will make use of his art as he sees best ; having learnt the work, it will be easy to settle your business. Then, if you wish to learn how to be recollected, do not be satisfied with the lowest meaning of the word, but take it in the highest and strictest manner. If you are able so to recollect yourself that you can rise to the summit of the mountain and taste what is sublime, think that on Mount Bethel, which means the house of God, there are many mansions, as our Lord says, and that the least of all is yours. But you must not desist, but say in thanksgiving with holy Job : ' I shall die in my

[1] Ps. xliv, 14. [2] S. Luke xiv, 13.

nest, and as a palm-tree shall multiply my days. My root is opened beside the waters and dew shall continue in my harvest. My glory shall always be renewed, and my bow in my hand shall be repaired.'[1]

The way to become proficient in this exercise as you desire is to practise it, for through not being accustomed to use his armour, David had to lay it aside,[2] feeling that what would have helped and given courage to those practised in using it, would have been an impediment to him in battle. This is the case with many who are untrained in this exercise; they think it loses time and prevents their saying their prayers, though in fact it is a divine thing which helps and incites those who practise it to do great deeds, and is as great in reality as it is insignificant in seeming to those who are mistaken about it. You will find this out if you make use of it as much as a saintly old man who told an intimate friend that recollection alone was the remedy for all his pains and infirmities, and this was because, as was well known, he practised it constantly.

He does not practise recollection who for the whole, or the greater part of the day, does not guard his heart, nor does he who on every slight occasion distracts his attention and draws apart from God, for proficients, when engaged in manual labour, are as recollected and as much in God's presence as are beginners when on their knees in solitude. Hence the former are greatly troubled by bodily labour, for as either they cannot or do not wish to relax their interior prayer and recollection, nor can they cease their burdensome outward occupations, they suffer in both ways, so that manual work should be kept for times when less devotion is felt.

S. Bernard says that an intention of maintaining recollection in all places is the best resolve we can make; firstly because it will soon raise us to perfection; and secondly, it does not conflict with any other good intention which pleases us.

He who is accustomed to perform some good action gains greatly by recollection; firstly because it makes him take pleasure in the good work; secondly, because he deserves to be accounted as among the ancients and is always prepared to merit more, as he acts freely with greater freedom and is less likely to fall into the opposite fault of the virtue he is practising. Custom brings him strength and facility, and little by little, he becomes like an angel, to whom it is given to pray in all places, and by degrees prayer becomes so natural to him that he is rather an angel than a man.

[1] Job xxix, 18–20. [2] 1 Kings xvii, 39.

Those who practise the exercise of meditation on the sacred Passion must also bear this in mind, for S. Bonaventure teaches that no one can claim to do so who does not contemplate Christ's sufferings in some way or another during the greater part of the day, for it is shameful to claim that we are recollected or devout to the Passion without just cause, since we do not practise the exercise.

SEVENTH TREATISE

TEACHES US HOW TO REJECT BAD THOUGHTS, SAYING: 'STRIFE WITHIN THE MIND COMES FROM NOT GUARDING ITS ENTRANCE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

THE DEVIL KEEPS THREE COMPANIES IN AMBUSH

ASTUTE commanders always keep troops in reserve, so that if one wing of the army should be defeated, it may recover courage to daunt the enemy, who are dismayed at the renewed strength of those who seemed beaten. This is exemplified by the valiant and patient captain Josue, who when besieging the city of Hai, set in ambush thirty thousand men on one side of it and five thousand on the other, while he, mustering the rest of the soldiers, marched openly upon the town. He pretended to flee before the citizens, who rushed out and pursued him and his army, while the ambush of thirty thousand men took the city and the five thousand held back those who returned to defend it; thus, by their combined efforts, they gained a complete victory.

This is the mode of warfare practised by all skilful warriors, and by the devil as well, who is an old soldier, so that the words apply to him: 'He fought many battles, and took the strongholds of all, and slew the kings of the earth: and went through even to the ends of the earth, and took the spoils of many nations: and the earth was quiet before him. And he gathered a power and a very strong army: and his heart was exalted and lifted up. And he subdued countries of nations and princes: and they became tributaries to him.'[2]

This is said of the most unjust and proud Alexander, who by his great strength, without any plea of justice, made himself master

[1] The seventh treatise, the Letter G, begins in the Spanish with *Guerra dan los pensamientos. . . .*

[2] 1 Mac. i, 2–5.

of that to which he had no right. Not only in this respect, but on account of his name, which signifies most powerful, he typifies the devil, of whom it may be said, in the words of the Book of Judges, that he was a mighty man, a warrior, and the son of a prostitute. By his wicked mother is denoted his crime and sin, of which he became the son when he obeyed and followed the counsels of wickedness.

This demoniacal and most powerful Lucifer, like another Alexander, fought and still fights many unjust battles daily. He took the strongholds of all when, by his conquering our first parents, we too were conquered. God had made them kings over all lower things, and the devil slew them when he made them fall under the divine sentence for having offended God. He told them that they would not die : hence death ensued to them so that Satan may be said to have killed them.

The devil is said to have ' gone through even to the ends of the earth,' which means our human nature corrupted by evil, so that it is written that ' the earth was corrupted before God, and was filled with iniquity.'[1] This inheritance is original sin which passes down from one to the other like a perpetual annuity, or as the slavery of a mother passes to her children, from the root to the fruit ; or as the ferment of yeast leavens the whole lump, or as the venom of the salamander infects the fruit of the tree, for Pliny says that if it touches the root it poisons the fruit and the whole tree.

The devil makes men captive and steals great treasure from those rich in grace when he makes them sin : ' the earth is quiet before him ' when they do not resist, which makes them his. He gathers a very strong army, for he makes those he conquers fight for him against those who are still free, giving help and devilish skill to his friends, as is seen in many sinners, who know even more than the demon himself, whose heart is lifted up on this account, and because, as Job says : ' There is no power upon earth that can be compared with him.'[2] ' He subdued countries of nations,' especially by making himself worshipped by the gentiles, as Alexander presumed to do, ' and they became tributaries to him ' when he styled himself the prince of this world, as our Lord called him.[3] The tyrants also, who are the lesser demons, do him continual service even against their will, for if they did not wish to be subject to God in heaven, still less do they desire to serve Lucifer on earth.

This most mighty soldier, who, like Goliath, ' was a warrior

[1] Gen. vi, 11. [2] Job xli, 24. [3] John xii, 31.

from his youth,'[1] uses the tactics I described; that is, he holds forces in ambush. His army is divided into three parts: this is figured in the Book of Kings, in the words: 'There went out of the camp of the Philistines three companies to plunder.'[2] The Philistines, that is the devils, pitch their tents in the field of their malice and divide their army into three battalions.

The first is luxury which is well armed and provided with all that it requires to win the victory. As S. Bernard says, it attacks all states and kinds of persons of every age, ugly or handsome, great or little, sick or healthy—in fact, the whole race. Many, after a fierce combat, come forth victors. These are assaulted by the second battalion of pride, with all the dignities, riches, honours, and suchlike, in order that men who did not degrade themselves by the first vice from self-respect, or because it is disgraceful, may be defeated by the second which seems pure and not so shameful, for it is publicly practised.

For souls which escape the second assault comes the third battle, which is much more fierce and cunning. In this combat the same devils attack men, bringing before their imagination spiritually the whole troop of vices, like Sennacherib who sent his whole army against Jerusalem. S. Paul warns the faithful of this, saying: 'Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood: but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in high places.'[3] In these words the Apostle shows how strenuous is the battle; firstly, because to conquer we need the whole armour of God: that is, his divine favour and skill, for human skill is unavailing in such combat, and the word 'deceits' denotes not only the strength but the keen malice of the fiends.

Again, the gravity of the conflict is shown by its not being against flesh and blood, which are of little account in comparison, and the titles of the enemy show that they put forth their utmost power against those who wrestle spiritually in high or spiritual places. According to the gloss, these are the virtues; they also mean the souls of the faithful against which this third battle is chiefly aimed, for the two former combats seem more corporeal and manifest and directed against what is material, not against what is spiritual like this third conflict, which consists in a variety of evil thoughts that harass and weary a man, of which this Letter

[1] 1 Kings xvii, 33. [2] 1 Kings xiii, 17. [3] Eph. vi, 10–12.

says : ' Strife within the mind comes from your not guarding its entrance.'

CHAPTER II

THE WAY IN WHICH THE DEVIL ASSAULTS THE JUST

In the two first battles the devil seems to leave the attack to what is on his side, that is to say the flesh, which is the first foe to begin the affray ; secondly, the world, which openly sides with hell against Christ. When a man overcomes these two, living chastely and devoting himself to God, the devil, seeing that his two friends are worsted, wages an interior warfare by the other demons who are his vassals and companions. To this may be applied the words of the Psalm : ' He sent upon them the wrath of his indignation : indignation and wrath and trouble, which he sent by evil angels. He made a way for a path to his anger : he spared not their souls from death.'[1]

To understand this, you must know that when vanquished by human and fleshly victory, the victim, seeing how he has been injured, humbles himself, making a virtue of necessity, or at least making a show of humility in order not to irritate his conqueror the more. This is figured by the mighty lord Adonibezec, who said, after he had been taken prisoner : ' Seventy kings, having their fingers and toes cut off, gathered up the leavings of meat under my table : so I have done, so hath God requited me,'[2] for his fingers and toes had been cut off.

Notice that this subjection is of those taken captive, not of those who though conquered are not taken, but who fly when their army is destroyed and are the more furious in proportion to the greatness of their defeat. This was the case with Lysias, who ' when he saw that his men were put to flight, and how bold the Jews were, and that they were ready either to live or to die manfully, went to Antioch, and chose soldiers, that they might come again into Judea with greater numbers.'[3] Lysias means ' one who unbinds,' and signifies the devil who strives to loosen and destroy in us the recollection which binds us to ourselves and to God, for its bonds are those of salvation.

With the help of divine grace, we can defeat Lysias but not make him prisoner. He flees, and his rage equals the shame of his repulse. He seeks some way by which, with fresh snares, he may return with stronger forces to revenge himself. Hence, the greater the victory we have won, the more furious and indignant

[1] Ps. lxxvii, 49, 50. [2] Judges i, 7. [3] 1 Mach. iv, 35.

must we expect him to be. The spiritual battle differs from the corporal in this : in the former, the victor must await a fiercer struggle, while in the latter he is at peace.

Therefore, brother, if you have left the world and overcome any vice, know that you have infuriated the demon against you still more and given him a special reason for hatred and rancour. Though he may be silent, be sure that he is arming himself and his soldiers against you. Seek a place of safety and be more prudent and wary, for he may turn your former victory into defeat if you relax your strictness and live more carelessly than you did while fighting. Be on the alert like another David, lest you should fall some day into the hands of your enemy Saul who seeks you in person, and as the Psalm says, he should send against you the wrath of his indignation he conceived at his defeat. And he may send, by his evil angels, with whom he will burn in fire prepared for them, indignation and wrath and spiritual trouble,[1] that is, the disgust which evil imaginations and thoughts will cause your soul, waging on it a perpetual war, the fiercer on account of its near proximity.

The wrath of the devil comes against beginners as by a narrow path, for God does not give him so much licence against them, but he advances on those who have defeated him as on a broad road, as though he had sworn not to forgive them, for his intention in making war by bad thoughts is to drive you to despair, or anger you, or make you mad. This is why David says that he sent you three things by his evil angels : tribulation which leads to despair ; wrath which provokes to anger ; and indignation which conduces to insanity. Lest you, who practise recollection, should fear these interior conflicts that lead to so much evil, know that it is not only on contemplatives the devil uses such artifices ; rather, it is want of recollection which gives rise to wrong thoughts and imaginations.

Do not aim all the stones at the devil, for your interior battle may arise from many quarters. It will correspond to the quarter from whence it comes. If God instigates it as a punishment for your many habitual faults, it will be a just war against those who wish to make a false friendship with the evil one, like those of whom S. Paul says : ' God delivered them up to a reprobate sense, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all iniquity, malice, fornication, avarice, wickedness, full of envy, murder, contention, deceit, malignity, whisperers, detractors, hateful to God, contumelious, proud, haughty, inventors of evil

[1] Ps. lxxvii, 49.

things, disobedient to parents, foolish, dissolute, without affection, without mercy.'[1]

The Apostle thus shows how God delivers his enemies into the hands of their foes, so that when we are in serious enmity against God with whom we must be in perfect peace, as a penalty for our sin he permits us to be delivered to our chief enemies, which are the vices. Hence follows exterior and interior war, and even, unless we return to him, combat in hell with the phantoms that strike with fiery weapons and devour with open mouth.[2]

Some men are so malignant and perverse that not only when they go to hell, but even now, it may be said of them in the words of Isaias: 'He hath poured out upon him the indignation of his fury, and a strong battle,'[3] for there is as much confusion in their thoughts as there was in the tongues of the builders of Babylon. Such people are at continual warfare with their neighbours, and every imaginable kind of artifice and deception is found in them.

CHAPTER III

HOW THE ANGELS CAN SUGGEST THOUGHTS TO OUR HEART

THE holy angels also can suggest thoughts to our heart, arousing our desires, giving us good inspirations, and causing many feelings by ways of which they know how to guide us as they wish. It may be said that the triple hierarchies work three marvellous effects in our soul. Do not be surprised at this, though the angel cannot enter its essence, which can be done by God alone, who is resisted by none and desired by all as a most beneficent Guest who by his sole presence repairs all that is amiss where he dwells, and consecrates and sanctifies it.

Respecting this, you must notice that as in material things one body cannot naturally penetrate another nor enter into its essence, neither in spiritual beings can the one penetrate or infuse itself into the other. God alone is excepted: like a light through crystal or clear water, he penetrates and infuses himself into the essence of a soul or of an angel in such a way that even the soul that feels something of what is taking place, knows not how it is accomplished, but only that it is done.

Yet it must not be denied that angels have some special influence over a holy soul which is fitly disposed to receive it. If by God's permission the soul felt the presence of the good spirit near it, though unseen, it would be strongly inclined to what is spiritual

[1] Rom. i, 28–30. [2] Isa. ix. [3] Isa. xlii, 25.

thereby. For if, even in material things, precious stones bring about changes in what is near them, what far greater influence would be that of an angel over the soul that felt its presence ? What inclines me to think this is a terrible fear which makes the soul feel as if it would go out of its body with sheer fright. It does not last long, though sometimes it recurs very frequently and so alarms and startles the soul that it is too disturbed and daunted to know what to do, and neither words, nor efforts, nor prayer suffice to calm it.[1] There is generally heard beforehand, even with the bodily ears, a sort of crackling sound as though the woodwork were being scratched by what passes. This is caused by the presence of the devil which makes itself felt, or by the soul's perception that he is coming. Sometimes this intense fear is felt without any thought or foreboding of it beforehand, while the soul is wrapped in prayer and recollection. It can only come from the devil, who has come to disturb the soul and who by God's permission makes himself felt, causing this sudden, unknown fright which affects the entire soul. It is not like the fear that we feel in the dark when we think of the dead or that a serpent would cause us, but, without bodily movement or trembling, the soul is seized with terror. If, as I believe, it is caused by the evil one's making his presence felt, to a slight degree, I feel sure that if we could realize, with the divine consent, that our guardian angel was close to us, it would do us much good, as he is so helpful and kind to us.

Setting aside this mode of action, as a rule the angel acts by influencing our desires, bringing certain things to our memory, or so disposing of matters as to bring about what he wishes. Thus it may be said that each angel acts either immediately or remotely on the interior spirit which is our soul : the seraphim inflame it ;

[1] S. Teresa speaks at length about the devil's temptations in the *Life*, chs. xxv and xxxi especially. In the first place she says of the inexplicable terror and disturbance felt by the soul : ' I wonder whether this may not be because one spirit is conscious of the presence of another.' S. Teresa treats at length of the devil's temptations, especially in chs. xxv and xxxi of the *Life* and xxviii to xl of the *Camino*. In a letter to her brother Lorenzo de Cepeda, dated February 10, 1577, she says : ' The dread you experience is certainly caused by your spirit's realizing the presence of the evil one, and although you do not see him with your bodily eyes, your soul must either feel or see him. Keep some holy water near you : nothing drives the demon away more effectually. It has often stood me in good stead. Sometimes I have not only been seized with fear but have been terribly tormented as well. But the devil does not go unless the holy water touches him, so you must sprinkle it all around you.'

the cherubim enlighten it ; the thrones make it stable and firm ; according to its three powers, which are concupiscence with which it desires and loves ; intelligence by which it understands and knows ; and the executive power by which it carries into action that which it knows and wishes. Or it may be said, according to a Doctor of the Church, that the angelic influence conforms to the three divisions of the soul, which are the upper, the lower, and the lower sensual nature that spends itself chiefly on bodily matters. According to this doctrine, the three hierarchies with their triple operations are figured by Solomon's house, of which ' he built the inner court with three rows of polished stones.'[1]

This is said because the Church triumphant is divided into three hierarchies called ' stones ' on account of their stability and ' polished ' for the reception of the divine light, which is received better in those more highly polished. The text also means that our pacific King and Lord builds the inner court of our souls in these three hierarchical orders, which are called ' stones ' because they make us stable and ' polished ' as they render us very ornate and bright in the love and knowledge of our Beloved ; therefore every soul may say in the words of Isaias : ' Every precious stone was thy covering.'[2]

It is not exaggeration to say that all these angels move our soul, since S. Paul teaches that they are ministering spirits sent to minister for them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation.[3] So that they all come and operate in our souls, each in its own manner, and not only on us, but on those in their own ranks : the higher purge and enlighten and perfect the lower and communicate from one to the other that of which there is greatest need.

CHAPTER IV

OF DIFFERENT SPIRITUAL TEMPTATIONS

As a counterpoise to the great good wrought in us by the holy angels, the devils war against us with all their power and sagacity, which are very inferior to that of the holy spirits. The demons are so subtle and strong, ingenious, wise, and experienced, cunning and cruel, and meet with such slight resistance from us that few escape from them unharmed. We ought to fight them as the children of Israel fought against those who held the Promised Land.

We know for certain that God has promised us the land of the

[1] 1 Kings vi, 36. [2] Ezech. xxviii, 13. [3] Heb. i, 14.

living, which is heaven, but these strong and monstrous guardians of it will not let us go on our way, which is from virtue to virtue through the desert of recollection, or by other roads by which the just travel to the country promised them by God. Hence, in every state of life men are tempted by many and various imaginations. Some think of nothing but their sins : how they confessed them ; whether they confessed them correctly ; whether they mentioned such and such a fault or have omitted some circumstance connected with it, or whether they prepared themselves well for the Sacrament of Penance. They spend the whole day in debating these and other more subtle questions until they become so utterly confused that they feel as though they had all the filth of hell on their conscience. The more they try to clear it up and strengthen it, the more swiftly does the devil overthrow and confuse it, telling them they have done nothing rightly, for they omitted to mention such and such an intention : he finally makes them believe they told a falsehood in confession, that the confessor did not know it, and that they did not state all the malice and manner of their sin. The devil fights so fiercely with fire and sword in this temptation that, do what they will, his victims never remain satisfied nor contented, but the greater their efforts, the less their success.

This proves that the evil one is concerned in it and is waging so fierce a war against their conscience that they never feel freed from sin, though they confess the same sin seven or eight times with a thousand circumstances that relate to it which are revealed by Satan ; they become so confused and blinded that they often ask their confessor, with good reason, whether he has understood them.

This temptation is followed at once by another as to whether they have fully performed their penance, though it may be only the recitation of one Hail Mary, which gives them as much trouble as the whole Psalter costs other people.

The third temptation of the devil makes these persons afraid to receive Holy Communion, for, often as they confess, they do not think they have made a good confession, nor does their conscience bear witness to it, so that they know not what to do. Look where they will, they seem caught in a net from which there is no escape.

The devil assaults others by causing within them such blasphemous thoughts against God and the saints that these persons feel as though they did nothing but abuse them so often and so maliciously that they are astonished at the new ways they find of doing so, and at the rapid succession and pointedness of their profanities

which break forth so impetuously anew at their every action that they feel as though the sin sprang from themselves. They think of nothing else day or night, nor can they sleep on account of their blasphemies. This is succeeded by an anger no less devilish, which strengthens the evil passions and seems wilful and deliberate ; it increases sometimes to such a point as to break forth into words when the person is alone. At the same time, the soul suffers from a disgust and depression which weary it exceedingly ; seeing that it is itself the cause of this anger, it does not believe that its displeasure is genuine and is bewildered at the contradictions within it.

Satan causes in other people a spiritual impurity, bringing to their imagination things of which they never thought or heard of or wished to do, nor would they for the world commit such sins. This reaches such a pitch that there is no saint, man or woman, to whom they do not attribute obscenity of a new and fiendish kind. They dare not look at a crucifix or image of our Lady ; when they enter a church, all these evils come before their mind as though this were the place where they were all committed, and such persons think that never in the world have there been such men as themselves.

The devil attacks other people by making them fancy there is sin in all they do, especially when they recite the Divine Office under obligation. He makes them believe they are not saying it rightly nor pronouncing the words with the attention and integrity required : that they say *m* instead of *n* and miss the last syllables. When they recite the second psalm, he suggests to their mind that they have not said the first, and some people are weak enough to credit such a passing thought. To them may be applied the words of the wise man : ' He that is hasty to give credit, is light of heart.'[1]

Such vain and scrupulous ideas are most troublesome during Mass. At the Consecration, when the priest should pronounce the words most clearly and calmly, the devil is so fierce and oppressive that he makes the celebrant hurry over the first word, slur those that follow, and form several syllables of the last. Not content with this, Satan incites priests to repeat the words several times, as though once did not suffice. As in the case of other prayers, the more they are reiterated, the less satisfaction results. If, as the sage declares, we should not repeat the word in our prayer,[2] much less should we reiterate the five words by which our Lord with his five wounds and pierced hands comes to us sinners.

[1] Ecclus. xix, 4. [2] Ecclus. vii, 15.

Other priests are tempted to pronounce the words of Consecration more fully: they say *hocque* instead of *hoc*, and *este* in the place of *est*, thus falsifying both the Latin and the meaning.

The evil one sometimes imprints in the imagination of devout persons things which seem, and really would be, very painful and unwelcome to them; he keeps this so constantly in their mind that they can hardly recollect anything else. He seems to present this perpetually before their imagination to prevent their thinking of what is good or becoming to the recollected.

The devil also wages war on those inclined to sensuality by inspiring them with a passionate and unlawful love for some person so that they seem never at rest except when seeking the society of the one for whom they feel this wrong and burning affection. They hardly know what it is to be at peace, so constantly does it torment them, though as it does not spring from the mind but from the sensual nature, such a person feels, on the other hand, an abhorrence for the one whom he seems perforce to desire and to whom he is irresistibly inclined. The more the reason detests this feeling of love, the fiercer and more painful is the conflict.

These impulses and warfare being interior, can hardly be described or even understood, nor are such persons believed by their confessors or advisers when they say that they seek and long for what in truth torments them more than anything in the world, and that if on the one hand they love and desire it, on the other they abhor it extremely. This inward struggle brought about by the evil one is terrible, and causes such passion and torture as to occasion the blackest melancholy while its sublety renders it impossible to explain even to one who might suggest some remedy. Weighed down by its burden, the man becomes troublesome to his friends as he tells them of his sufferings on the chance of obtaining some passing relief.

CHAPTER V

OF OTHER THINGS THAT DISTURB US

Our five senses are wont to disturb us when, during prayer, what we see or hear distracts us. Such things seem to crowd upon us when we spend more time on it; then all the affairs of the world come before us as though we sought to recollect ourselves in order to give audience to them and think them over at leisure. Speaking of this, holy Job says that his heart did not follow his

eyes,[1] as do the hearts of many people who, when they are striving to recollect themselves, are like boys who run after butterflies. This is usual with people accustomed to be interested in what they see and hear and to give credit to reports unreasonably.

A war of thoughts is also brought about by the four passions of the heart—joy, fear, hope, and sorrow—which, like four winds contrary to recollection, attack the sea of our conscience, making it disturbed, restless, and stormy.

Our memory also assaults us, for if the mind gives up control over it and lets it go, it cannot remain fixed upon any one thing, but by its very weakness goes from one subject to another, flitting from right to wrong thoughts, sometimes the more eagerly and wilfully when most we want to quiet it and be recollected.

Our bodily state also disturbs our thoughts at times, for invalids, who are usually more capricious than the healthy, are also given more to thinking about trifles. A holy man, whom I knew well, complained when at the point of death, as of his greatest grievance, that he could not recollect himself; he was surprised that the control he held so habitually before should fail him then.

Wrong thoughts trouble a man according to the predominant humours of the body, and a bad constitution makes him low-spirited and restless. Those with a strong constitution keep their peace better in the minor war of wandering thoughts, though the custom of restraining them can, to a great extent, nullify the effects of bad health, while carelessness will give rise to conflict where there seemed to be peace.

Day and night, as David says, we are assaulted by these and other thoughts, so that we may quote the words of the Psalm: 'Have mercy on me, O God, for man hath trodden me under foot; all the day long he hath afflicted me, fighting against me. My enemies have trodden on me all the day long; for they are many that make war against me. From the height of the day I shall fear: but I will trust in thee. In God I will praise my words, in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do against me. All the day long they detested my words: all their thoughts were against me unto evil.'[2]

In these few words David has touched on all I have said. To understand how they apply spiritually to our subject, you must notice the title of the Psalm. It begins: 'Have mercy on me,' which according to the gloss is: 'For victory for the silent dove that is removed at a distance from the sanctuary.' David humbly composed this Psalm when the Philistines held him in Geth.

[1] Job xxxi, 8, 7. [2] Ps. lv, 2–6.

According to this title, spiritually explained, this Psalm is a prayer made by a recollected man asking God to deliver him from the conflicts I have described. The name David, signifying 'beloved,' is the recollected soul loved by the heavenly Father, who, his Son tells us, seeketh to be adored in pure spirit without corporeal images.[1] The Holy Ghost also loves such men, for he is said to rejoice over the humble and quiet, therefore it is stated that the humble David wrote this Psalm. More stress is laid here on his humility than on his other virtues, because it is the chief thing necessary for recollection, as we shall explain.

This Psalm or prayer asks for victory over the conflicts described; this is complete when in the superior and highest part of the soul there reigns the divine silence, transient though it may be when, in peace, with the imagination at rest, the soul rejoices in that good which surpasses all understanding.

To this great spiritual victory may be applied the words relating to the most supreme of human conquests: 'The earth was quiet before him.'[2]

I said that this victory was obtained in prayer by God's help, in the highest of the three heavens which our soul contains. The infernal dragon and his angels strive with all their might to impede it by means of wandering thoughts, which they consider the most suitable weapons. These are symbolized by the Philistines, whose name means 'full of dust,' for this dust the devils bring to blind the eyes of the souls in prayer on whom they are waging war. They fight with the same arms as the eagle uses for the stag. He rolls in a sand-pit until he is charged with sand and dust; then, flapping his wings rapidly, he stands on the stag's head, grasping it with his claws, and with great dexterity casts the sand into the creature's eyes until he is blinded. The stag, not seeing where it is going, flings itself down a precipice which is sometimes so steep that the fall breaks all its bones, and the eagle can then wreak his will on it.

Of this Philistine eagle, laden with the dust of its evil thoughts with which it thinks to blind the swift-footed stag, may be said in the words of the prophet: 'The Lord will bring upon thee a nation from afar, and from the uttermost ends of the earth, like an eagle that flieth swiftly, whose tongue thou canst not understand. A most insolent nation, that will show no regard to the ancients, nor have pity on the infant.'[3]

The devil tries to bring shameful thoughts to one who is praying, even though he is so old that nature forbids him what the

[1] John iv, 23. [2] 1 Mach. i, 3. [3] Deut. xxviii, 49, 50.

devil offers ; and these thoughts come from so far that actions the man performed when quite a small child come to his memory to disturb him. If this does not suffice, the evil one suggests such thoughts as would never occur to a human being, so that they are clearly suggested by the devil's arts ; a man cannot understand their language, for they are too miserably perplexing even to speak about. They come like an eagle flying swiftly, with such an impetus as to compel the soul to consent by surprise, if possible, and are too rapid to be beaten off : nor could such care as Abraham's drive off, from the sacrifice of prayer, birds so fleet and evil[1] unless God helped him who prays as he helped David. The latter was first taken by the Philistines to Geth, which means a ' wine-press where the skins of the grapes are pressed,' because before man gains the victory he must be kicked and trodden under foot a thousand times, as David declares in the beginning of this Psalm of which we are explaining the title. To be trodden under foot and kicked means that a man should meet in this spiritual war with such severe encounters as to lose the hope of gaining his desire.

To further explain David, who must have referred to a spiritual victory, we must note that he prayed in this Psalm for the silent dove that is removed to a distance from the sanctuary. ' Behold, I fled from my enemies and abode in solitude.' This dove without any bitter malice is the one and only dove of the Lord that is declared in the Canticle of Canticles to be the faithful soul. It must be silent, for our Lord requires love, not words, and the dove is rich in love, which is very necessary for recollection.

This shows the need of prayer, that a man may be freed and may escape alive and victorious from the interior battle caused by evil thoughts. This is shown by Judas Machabeus, who always prayed before he fought and was defeated on the only occasion he omitted it. The patriarch Jacob teaches us that this is the way to conquer by his words : ' Gad, being girded shall fight before him : and he himself shall be girded backward,'[2] for Gad's descendants, having to fight those of Dan, must gird themselves, as the will must do in order that the mind may come forth victorious. It must forget worldly matters, for Gad means ' happy,' and love is the happiness of our will, for, as S. Gregory declares, it enters where the understanding cannot. The latter is symbolized by Dan, that is, ' he who judges,' meaning our understanding to which judgement pertains, though it cannot rightly judge sublime subjects which, as S. Paul says, have not entered into the heart of

[1] Gen. xv, 11. [2] Gen. xlix, 19.

man.[1] Love girds these souls backwards by making them forget the things which are behind ; that is, the base and fleeting affairs of this world.

From this we can also learn how to fight zealously by inciting our will to a burning love which will quickly consume the straw of the thoughts which come to the mind.

CHAPTER VI

OF THE STRENGTH NECESSARY FOR THE INTERIOR BATTLE

By the divine decree, four kinds of men are excluded from this warfare with the thoughts because they are unsuited for the recollection for which we strive in order that God may possess our soul in peace.

The first class of men are those who have begun to build a house without finishing it. These are such as have entered the house of the religious Order they prefer and have, as it were, built it for themselves by choosing it, but by the non-observance of the minor practices proper to beginners, they have not finished the building. These persons are unsuitable for the conflict of recollection, because as one of the saints declares : ' He must not ask for greater perfection who despises the lesser.'

The second unsuitable class of men is that of those who have planted vineyards that do not bear fruit of which all may eat. This includes avaricious priests who work in the vineyard of the Church, the fruits of which they hoard instead of sharing them with the poor as they are bound to do. This being known, let them not be admitted to this conflict. Covetousness is more notable in them than are other evils, for it is their special vice, and such men are the meanest in the world, although they are more bound than the rest to share their goods with the poor.

The third kind of people unsuited to this conflict are the married, including seculars living in the world if they are sinfully attached to bodily pleasures, as are wedded couples who are too fond of one another. These are all unfit for this exercise.

The fourth cause of unfitness is faint-heartedness, which prevents men from daring to begin recollection in which they will have to overcome the war of their thoughts, which they think is impossible. They quote an instance in the life of S. Bernard, who promised his mule to a labourer if he would say a very short prayer without thinking of anything else. In the midst of the prayer,

[1] 1 Cor. ii, 9.

the man began to wonder whether the saddle and reins would go with the mule.

This example, which applies to a wager, is worthless here, for the matter of which we treat is not connected with betting, but with faith and trust in the Lord, of whom it is said that he will bring our enemies to nothing in order that we may progress. Of this S. Gregory says: 'No one attributes to himself the victory over his thoughts, for the corruption each man bears within him from the first through his carnal desires must war with him as life goes on. Unless this evil is at once suppressed by the divine power, it drags down to the depths all the natural good of his nature, "for neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God giveth the increase."'[1]

S. Gregory does not bid you to despair, but, if you overcome, to attribute to God the victory which will be the more glorious for having been won by his almighty hand.

Some people are anxious to know the source of the thoughts which weary them: whether they come from the devil, from the evil desires by which everyone is tempted, from some occasion of sin or danger which they have incurred, or from any of the causes that occur in this world.

S. Bernard thus answers this difficulty: 'Who watches and guards his interior impulses, whether passive or carried into action, so carefully that he can discern in his heart between the infirmity of his soul and the sting of the serpent? I do not think it is possible for any mortal unless, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, he has received the special gift which the Apostle reckons among his other graces, and calls "the discerning of spirits."'[2] Therefore everyone, as Solomon directs, should "with all watchfulness keep his heart,"[3] and all within it with most vigilant attention. Though he may have exercised himself continually in such matters and have gained much experience, he will not be able to discern with certitude between the wrong thoughts that spring from himself and those which come from the seed sown within him; for who can understand every evil? Nor does it matter much to us what is the source of our temptation: we ought to watch and pray that we may not consent to it, no matter whence it comes. The prophet prays against the one and the other when he cries: "From my secret sins cleanse me, O Lord: and from those of others spare thy servant."[4] I cannot give you what I have not received, and I own that I have not received the gift of being able to decide

[1] 1 Cor. iii, 7. [2] 1 Cor. xii, 10.
[3] Prov. iv, 23. [4] Ps. xviii, 13.

with certainty between the action of the heart and the seed of the enemy. Undoubtedly both are bad and spring from evil; they are both in the heart but are not part of it. Of this I am sure, though I am not sure as to which to attribute to the heart and which to the enemy without risk of making a mistake.'

S. Bernard shows us that there is no danger in being ignorant of the origin of our conflict with bad thoughts: it suffices to know that it springs from two evil sources, which, as is said in Machabees, 'nourish wars . . . and will not suffer the realm to be in peace.'[1] This war of evil thoughts breeds dissension and disorder in the body in which the sensitive nature is in conflict with the reason while doing great harm to the soul by destroying the calm and rest by which God would possess it in peace.

CHAPTER VII

A CANTICLE OF PEACE

As, according to S. Augustine, peace is the ultimate good sought in war, it is right we should speak of it, though to tell the truth it is so excellent that the hand of God alone can make it, especially if it is the kind of which we treat and for which the prophet David longed when he said: 'Come and behold ye the works of the Lord: what wonders he hath done upon earth, making wars to cease even to the end of the earth. He shall destroy the bow, and break the weapons: and the shield he shall burn in the fire. Be still, and see that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, and I will be exalted in the earth.'[2] It is much that God should make wars to cease in the soul; but a great marvel that he should do so unto the ends of the mortal earth that we bear within our human body.

The bow God has to destroy is the malice of the fiend with which he shoots bad thoughts into our soul. The weapons he must break are those same arrows and other arts which are broken when, though they reach the soul, they fall and do no harm. The shield with which the devil defends himself against us is our flesh which he says has been inclined to wickedness since our youth, and it is that which injures us, not he. This flesh, says the gloss, must be burnt by the fire of the Holy Ghost to purify and make it fit for a vessel of the temple of God. Hence the Lord bids us be still and see that he is God, and that he will be exalted among

[1] 1 Mach. xiv, 6. [2] Ps. xlv, 9–11.

the nations, that is, the thoughts which persecute us and will be turned to good; and he will be exalted in the earth of our flesh which will no longer oppose him.

The Lord promises this peace to those who seek it, saying: 'I know the thoughts that I think towards you . . . thoughts of peace, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience. And you shall call upon me, and you shall go; and you shall pray to me and I will hear you. You shall seek me and shall find me: when you shall seek me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, saith the Lord: and I will bring back your captivity, and I will gather you out of all nations, and from all the places.'[1] The Lord, then, is to speak peace to his people, that is, to the faculties and powers of our soul, yet it is right that in the meantime we should sometimes make a truce. This we shall do if we seek some means of getting rid of our wrong thoughts.

I wish to say nothing to the inordinately scrupulous, by which I mean those who are well known to be so, who are very burdensome to those they live with, giving much reason for complaint and causing many to sin. I believe they will have to render a strict account of their conduct to God, for they follow the ceremonies badly in choir and distract everyone by bawling the chant which the others sing quietly as they should. I do not say that they make themselves singular in order to appear better than the rest, though it may be so at times. For they do make themselves remarkable by their exaggerated care, not only in pronouncing the words, for that would be of lesser consequence, but by their shouting, hissing, and grating sounds, especially at the Consecration at Mass, when they should be most calm in order to arouse the devotion of the congregation. They are then so hurried, and make such strange gestures, that those present doubt, with good reason, whether they have consecrated or not, or whether they do not believe in the Mystery, or something of the kind.

I speak of this because I have witnessed it, and have been asked whether such and such a person consecrated the Host or not, for those who heard his Mass were in doubt about it, and were glad of an excuse for not hearing or serving his Mass. I say nothing to depraved people who are obstinate and pay attention to nobody, for the devil teaches them excuses to make to whatever is said to them so that they may keep to their own opinion, which nothing could make them change. In fact, they plan how to oppose good advice instead of taking it, and purposely play more

[1] Jer. xxix, 11.

antics to trouble and annoy those who are sincerely and simply serving God in joy of heart.

I wish to say nothing to such people, who generally have the germs of madness, and often a great deal more, in them, for the malady torments them more for a few days when the moon is full. Let such people, as a remedy for their illusions, take care to eat and sleep well and not to overwork themselves, which is a practice to which extremely scrupulous persons are much given, though it would be better if they were given to obey the sound advice given them by unprejudiced men.

Nor do I wish to undertake the cure of these people, for they are averse to genuine devotion and devote all their care to speaking to God as though they were talking to Lorenzo Valla, or some other person who would find fault with their Latin. They honour God with their lips while their heart is busy with scruples as to whether or no they said this or that or the other, as though they were obliged to remember all they had said and must repeat to God the lesson they had learnt by heart. They attend to 'the letter that killeth' and not to 'the spirit which quickeneth,' as S. Paul says.[1] They declare that the letter is a matter of obligation, but the spirit is not, without perceiving that they should do the one thing and not leave the other undone. They are like the wicked servant who, for fear of loss, would not commit his master's talent to the banker, but kept it, thinking it would suffice to repay him. But this was not the case ; his Lord demanded the usury of him with great severity.

Nor do I mean to address such men, of whom very few fall wilfully into such folly, though, small as their number is, they make themselves as conspicuous as though they were many, like the pharisee who made a great noise in the temple. I only beg of them, few as they are, to conceal themselves as far as possible so as not to disturb and trouble their brethren so much. Their confessor should give them a penance suited to their fault. For instance, if they are accustomed to repeat their penance several times, let him forbid them, and tell them to say such or such a prayer *once*, well or ill, as human frailty allows, for it is hardly possible to perform any task absolutely without a flaw. If they take a long while in saying their penance, he must limit the time to what other people would require. When they confess, as soon as he understands one matter, let him tell them to pass on at once to some other subject, as this is clear to him. If what they confess is not a sin, he should not allow them to mention it again, but

[1] 2 Cor. iii, 6.

tell them it is of no consequence and they must say nothing about it.

In such cases it is the superiors who are to blame for not watching them and taking such things in time. They should prevent these persons' singularities and make them conform with the rest. Superiors ought and are bound to make them take their right place in the choir so that they cannot violate the laws, and must order them to be silent while those on the opposite side of the choir are reciting ; not to say the same words more than once, and not speak more loudly than the others. They should make these scrupulous persons confess to them, or should give them a prudent confessor, bidding them under obedience to believe what he says and do all he tells them.

The superior is bound to use these and other suitable remedies without waiting until the scrupulous person is too obstinate to obey, as in the case of one I knew, whose guardian asked the Pope for a faculty to dispense the friar from certain duties in order to quiet his conscience. The Holy Father conceded all his plenary power with regard to the scrupulous subject to the superior, who thought this would remedy matters. But the religious put such faith in his scruples that he set little value on the favour, which retarded his cure and made him more stubborn in his own opinions.

Such people are much to be pitied, for religion, which is a joy to others, is a torment to them, and they are sometimes so involved in their scruples that they cannot make head against them. The remedy would be for them to take the advice of their brethren and believe that the latter perform their duty better than they do themselves.

CHAPTER VIII

REMEDIES FOR CERTAIN TEMPTATIONS

For those who are very scrupulous about confession, a piece of advice given by a holy man to one who consulted him on the matter should suffice ; never think about confession except in the limited time during which you are preparing yourself for it. This should be suited to the state of the penitent. Those who confess every or almost every day do not require more time than it would take to recite the *Miserere mei, Deus*, during which we should examine ourselves carefully. If, before or afterwards, other sins occur to our memory, we must postpone the thought of them until the time for preparation : we must not listen to the suggestion, but tell it to return at the proper time. Unless you do this,

the devil will never stop reminding you of faults which you have confessed perfectly well, making you believe you have omitted them. But if you limit your time of preparation, he cannot do you so much harm.

For those who doubt whether they have made a good confession, or think they have not explained themselves properly or mentioned all their faults, it will be enough to satisfy God and their conscience if they have not willingly omitted mentioning any sin. They should content themselves with this and trust to reason more than to their misguided conscience. Their confessor should compel them to receive Holy Communion and not allow them to repeat their confessions often, or do more than is easily performed by all faithful Christians.

If the penitent is a religious, his superior should watch over him no less closely than if he were inclined to any other vice, for scruples beget despair. He should tell the confessor not to let the religious continue his scruples or confess them and should blame him severely for all excess.

What shall we say to those who undergo a cruel assault of temptations to blasphemy and impurity ? Those who wish to be spiritual must expect to be spiritually attacked, for as the Children of Israel did not enter the Promised Land until they had defeated the seven nations, neither shall we enter perfection before we have overcome the seven vices. He wins a bodily victory over the spirit of blasphemy who restrains his tongue from speaking ill of God and gives praise to him.

There is another more spiritual way of overcoming this vice, for there is a second fiercer and more hidden war. As a rule, no one reviles God unless he meets with some annoyance or disaster, so that the assault being exterior is easy to rebuff. This war is not against the prince of darkness, for it is plainly evident. But when the source of the evil and the devil's attack are within us, he acts by means of the dark secrets of his craft, and raises the interior whirlwind of blasphemy of which David complained, crying : ' The council of the malignant hath besieged me.'[1] The devils are those who speak malignantly against God, and their councils are their foul blasphemies and temptations to impurity by which they wage hidden war. The Lord often allows, for the profit of his own, that Satan should use all his arts to disturb us by setting before our imagination all these frenzied thoughts. God forbade this when he gave the devil leave to tempt holy Job but not to touch his soul (person)[2] by disquieting his imagination.

[1] Ps. xxi, 17. [2] Job i, 12.

If this is allowed in our case, it is in order to purge away our sins and render our victory more glorious.

Though I said that the devil carries on this conflict within our imagination, yet sometimes he increases it by provocation from outside, for our interior torment is worse when we have other vexations as well. This war consists in foul imaginations and unruly thoughts of many kinds. The chief source of confidence for one assailed by it is the certainty that he has not consented, for, as S. Bernard says, our enemy is weak and only conquers those who hold themselves defeated, so that unless we do this, the phantasms and crazy fancies of the fiend profit him nothing. Therefore we must never think we are beaten in this fray,[1] even though it increases to such a pitch that the devil makes us speak the words he wants, nor should we think he has conquered us if we feel any dislike or hatred for it.

The second means by which to gain a swifter victory over proud Lucifer is to despise him, making no account of the thoughts he raises in us, of which we shall the more easily rid ourselves if we take no notice of them. For in fact, they do us no harm, but cleanse our souls. We should act like a man against whom, as he walks through the street, the wind blows the dust to stop him : he should care nothing for it, but shut his eyes and go on. In the former case to close the eyes, despise the annoyance, and continue is to persevere in prayer and good works. The trouble will soon disappear like dust when the wind falls, for the devil will cease to raise it and the temptation will stop as it did not spring from us, though it seemed to, for our Lord will never permit such a thing if we trust in him.[2]

As I mean to speak more fully in the tenth Letter about temptations and their remedies, I ask you in this, if you wish to acquire

[1] S. Teresa, who tells us elsewhere that she had no patience with people who cry in terror : ' The devil, the devil,' when they ought to cry : ' God, God ! ' shows more confidence than appears here. ' O God, is not the captain whom men follow in this war against thee thy vassal ? And he dwells in unquenchable flames—how can he rise up against thee ? How can the vanquished inspire courage ? What can he give who owns nothing but sufferings ? How can it be, my God ? . . . Why do men cowed by the devil defy thee ? . . . Return, ye children of men, return to your senses . . . cease from such sin and spend your fury and your strength on him who wars against you to rob you of your inheritance ' (*Exclam.* xi, 5, 8).

[2] ' The true servant of God ought to despise the terrors that Satan sends only to make him afraid. Let him understand that each time we despise such fears, their force is lessened and the soul gains power over them ' (*Life*, ch. xxxi, 10).

recollection by practising this holy exercise, to remember to make use of a very brief means of ridding yourself of various distracting thoughts. This is that you should say ' No ' to them when they come to you during prayer, which is the time you spend in intercourse with God. Let prudence be the door-keeper and say ' no ' to them, telling them he cannot open to them now : no one can be admitted, nor is anyone wanted ; they are not called for and would do harm rather than good at present ; let them go away. This short word ' no ' forbids and gets rid of all of them.

I warn you against discussing the matter farther in your mind : it would greatly disturb your recollection ; to examine into the matter would be a hindrance ; therefore, shut the door with ' no.' You well know that the Lord will come and enter your soul if the doors, which are your senses, are closed. Therefore, bid ' no ' be the janitor who locks and bars them well and answers ' no ' to all arrivals. But you will answer that it would be wrong to say ' no ' to God, and he alone is expected. But God comes in some other way of which you know nothing. ' For the Spirit breatheth where he will . . . but thou knowest not whence he cometh and whither he goeth.'[1]

There is a ' no ' in the mind which is an error and another which is unbelief, and a ' no ' in the will that is sin ; and all these drive God away and bring in things of the world. But this ' no ' of recollection repels material matters which enter by the doors of the senses and opens the heart to God who is not rejected by it ; rather we so reject all things to give him sole entrance. Therefore, if you wish to overcome in this conflict with wandering thoughts, make this ' no ' your mainstay and you will overthrow him who comes to defeat you, as David overthrew Goliath.

Though you keep the door of your senses shut, you will still need this ' no ' that will keep away even those who planned to come. You must value it highly and defend yourself with it against the devil who comes while you are recollected to break the door down. With ' no ' you will break his head, as is symbolized in the Book of Judges, which says : ' Abimelech coming near the tower, fought stoutly : and approaching to the gate, endeavoured to set fire to it : and behold a certain woman casting a piece of millstone from above, dashed it against the head of Abimelech, and broke his skull.'[2] Abimelech means counsellor and typifies the devil, who comes at that time to give us advice unasked when we are enclosed in the tower of recollection by which man rises to the highest part of his soul to attain to what

[1] John iii, 8. [2] Judges ix, 52, 53.

is eternal. To prevent this the devil draws near and fights furiously, doing his utmost, and as he cannot communicate directly with the higher part of the soul nor can he trouble it, he approaches the gate, that is, the ingrained sensuality of our flesh, which he endeavours to set on fire with wicked desires and thoughts. But the wise woman, whose loins are girded with strength, casts at his head (the beginning of his temptation) this word ' no,' which is as effective as David's polished stone. This will carry out David's advice to put our mind into the stone we fling, as S. Jerome says.

There is deep meaning in the words of Holy Scripture that the woman broke his skull, for there dwell sensitiveness, the imagination, the fancy, instinct, and the memory of material things that ought to cease to act during recollection, which is harmed rather than helped by these five things. So with this ' no ' we must break the devil's skull : this we shall do if we forbid him to come near ours or influence it directly or indirectly when we withdraw to the heights of recollection. The heart (as those know who enter into their hearts) is full of entrances and needs many door-keepers, and all must guard it with this ' no,' the value of which is best known by the most recollected, for as regards recollection, it affirms more than it denies.

EIGHTH TREATISE

OF TEACHING AND LEARNING RECOLLECTION. 'HAVE ALL FOR YOUR MASTERS, AND WHILE LOVING THEM, HAVE RECOURSE TO ONE ALONE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

ALL MEN WHO WISH IT HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE TAUGHT CONTEMPLATION

ONE of the chief reasons why the contemplative man is compared to an eagle is that given by the holy prophet: 'As the eagle enticing her young to fly, and hovering over them, he spread his wings, and hath taken him and carried him on his shoulders.'[2] He who knows how to rise above by the flight of contemplation and build the nest of his contemplation on the heights should not forget us who remain below, but should entice us to fly. As we have the capabilities and desire for it, he should spread his wings over us and show us how he moves them. If once does not suffice, let him do it often, for beginners should be well instructed, especially for so high a flight as that of contemplation, in which the contemplative sometimes rises so far as to lose sight even of himself, like him who said he knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body. The contemplative ought to entice others to soar like this and be as solicitous as the eagle to teach its young to fly when it sees they are ready for it. He should provoke and hover over them; that is,[3] should instruct them by word and example, for words do not suffice if

[1] This treatise, being the Letter H, has for title, *Haras maestros a todos*.

[2] Deut. xxxii, 11.

[3] S. Teresa uses this comparison. She applies it to the help given us by good example. 'It is encouraging to see that trials which seemed to us impossible to bear are possible to others, and that they submit to them sweetly. Their flight makes us soar, like nestlings taught by the elder birds, who, though they cannot fly far at first, little by little imitate their parents' (*Castle*, M. iii, ch. ii, 18).

example, which is much more powerful, is wanting. To hover over them means that he should excel them, for the master should surpass his pupil, not the pupil his master. He ought to fly farther, so that by prayer he may go before them to win them favour from him towards whom the flight of all is bent. Thus he will succeed in teaching to many the art which we ought all to long and strive for with all our might, as our Letter bids us : ' Have all for masters, and while loving them, have recourse to one alone.'

This Letter has a double meaning of which we will give two explanations. The first is that by means of our teaching and good example, we should become instructors to others, making known to them the art of recollection if we have learnt it, and while feeling a special love for those we have taught, should take flight to him in heaven who is above all masters. Thus we shall not spend all our time in training others while withdrawing ourselves from the interior, secret school where God instructs the soul. Nor shall we be like some half-taught men who, having studied one subject, leave the college to teach it and never learn the rest. Let us not do this, but while training others, let us learn in the continual study of recollection the better things to which we should take our flight.

In its second meaning, our Letter advises those who practise recollection to learn from everybody, taking each as an instructor in the singular or special virtue he possesses that deserves to be imitated. For the rest, he should withdraw from all, though loving them, and betake himself to one whom he should choose as his sole teacher. He should not confide his feelings to all, but copy their good qualities and love them, going for help and protection to someone who suits him to whom he should submit himself in order to be fully and affectionately instructed. Therefore I say : ' Flee to one only,' for if we flee to a person, we hope to be protected and helped and loved and cherished.

The chief reason for which I wrote this book was to draw everyone's attention to this exercise of recollection : that is why I say ' all ' in this Letter without accepting persons. I teach all how to draw near to the universal Master who seeks to be served and be friends with all, for it is written that wisdom, who is very sweet and delightful, standing not only on the tops of the highest places, but beside the gates and in the very doors of the city, cries to the sons of men.[1]

Some persons cannot endure unmoved that so sublime and lofty

[1] Prov. viii.

an exercise should be taught to those immersed in sin and given up to material pleasures and engaged in worldly affairs ; they say that a man with his wife by his side can ill think of God. I answer that I am not addressing myself or recommending this exercise except to those who keep the divine commandments, whoever they may be. I warn those who break these commands that they are bound to obey them. If they do this, I tell them, as a very sound piece of advice, to practise prayer, cease from whatever withdraws them from God, and live with a good conscience, keeping God's holy laws in which consists full and entire salvation. They are called the laws of life, for they give life to the soul and constitute it in perfect charity, so that love, which springs from the will, actuated by this charity, may be more acceptable to God and deserve all that is good.

If anyone should object that the Holy Ghost did not inspire the hearts of the prophets as regards marriage, I certainly believe it, but in this exercise we do not aim at being prophets, but friends of God, which we can be without being prophets. This married persons can be : they may even gain much merit by their state in God's eyes if they perform their duty, as many do ; therefore no one should exclude them from any kind of prayer that they wish to practise with due dispositions. If, as S. Jerome affirms, the Holy Ghost did not inspire the prophets in their married life, he could do so during their prayer. No faithful Christian could deny this, unless, like certain heretics, he denied the Sacrament of marriage, in which, as Holy Church teaches, God communicates his grace to those who receive it worthily. Marriage is called a Sacrament, being a sign of the sacred interior grace conferred by it.

Holy matrimony was ordained, not by S. Dominic nor S. Peter, but was instituted by the word of God, the eternal Father, in the earthly paradise, was approved by his Son at Cana of Galilee where he regaled the guests by his first miracle, and is confirmed by the Holy Ghost who communicates his grace to those who, not being in mortal sin, receive the Sacrament of marriage. Those who keep God's holy commandments and are faithful to the laws of this Sacrament, should in no wise be dissuaded from contemplation, but rather encouraged if they wish to engage in it. Let those who advise them not to pray think they are committing as grave a sin as though they forbade them the religious life ; nor let anyone believe that his intention frees him from blame as it arises from ignorance, for that does not excuse sin.

Nowadays some people resemble those who forbade the chil-

dren to draw near our Lord as he passed through the streets, for which he blamed them, saying : ' Suffer children to come to me, and forbid them not.'[1]

No doubt our Lord, with his holy inspiration, goes through the streets and squares seeking for very close friends, for he is not content with those enclosed in religious houses, but wants the others also. As S. Gregory says on the Canticles :[2] ' We who are enclosed ought specially to go forth to seek him, as did the bride. We do this when we have the humility to imitate virtues possessed by certain persons living in the world, on account of which God dwells in their souls.'

Some persons find a difficulty in the command that beasts should be stoned to death if they approached Mount Sinai ; they interpret this to suit their own opinion but not correctly, for in the same text it is ordered that men too should be stoned if they drew near,[3] and the priests were forbidden to pass the same limits.[4] Those who err in this comment, err in all the authorities they quote from the Scriptures and teaching of the saints which they bring forward to prove that seculars should not be encouraged or instructed in mental prayer. In opposition to this, our Letter admonishes those who have received this gift to teach it duly to all faithful Christians who wish to devote themselves to this holy practice, for I do not believe that any saint or authentic writing forbids it. In fact, the blessed S. Paul lays no greater stress in his epistles on anything than that Christians should pray and desire what is holy ; and Christ our Redeemer taught the poor Samaritan woman that she must pray in spirit, like the true adorers of God, and bade her ask for the living water, meaning the Spirit whom believers were to receive.

Let no one be like Simon the leper who condemned as sinners those who were not content with his own manner of action, for God works in other secret ways within the hearts of those who are converted to him. Anna, the mother of Samuel, prayed in the temple, but Heli reviled her, condemning her for drunkenness ; yet her humility triumphed, and her short, fervent prayer availed better than the long years the old priest had spent in laxity in the temple, for which he and those he had perverted perished.[5]

We know that though the publican stood afar off from the altar and dared not raise his eyes to heaven, God beheld him and drew so near to him that the man went down to his house justified.

[1] S. Luke xviii, 16.
[2] Cant. iii.
[3] Exod. xix, 13.
[4] *Ibid.* 24.
[5] 1 Kings i.

This was not the case with the pharisee, though he remained in the temple giving thanks to God, for they were not rightly rendered.[1]

Not only does God receive sinners every day to repentance, but he shares with them the interior food, giving them to know the sweetness of contemplation, and many women rise with him from Galilee to the spiritual Jerusalem ; that is, peaceful and recollected prayer. Not only does he receive those who come, but he calls them to him by his inspirations and invites them by his grace to give him entrance to the secret mansion of their heart. This is shown in the case of Zaccheus and S. Matthew, who were urged to receive God by God himself. I have found this by experience, for the Holy Ghost did not pray only over the Apostles but over the whole house, a figure of the universal Church, in which divine grace is communicated to all faithful Christians. The *Golden Epistle* says of this : ' Is God the God of the solitaries only ? Rather, he is the God of all, for he has mercy on all men and hates nothing that he has made. I wish you to think that everything is at peace except where you are and to judge yourself more harshly than anyone else.'

The most Christian Gerson,[2] in order to bring extremely recollected prayer to everyone's notice, wrote in his own tongue a book called *The Mount of Contemplation*, which he dedicated to one of his sisters, so that people should not think he was addressing solely religious, for he wished to see seculars also attain to the summit of contemplation. I, too, intend in this book to teach not only people who live in retirement, but everyone else, especially those in the world, among whom are many who greatly desire all that is good, and who do not lack the opportunity, but instruction, as to how to approach God in secret prayer. This is little taught by preachers, whose time is wholly taken up in correcting wrongdoing. I do not blame those who say little about prayer, though it is the sole help for the good Christian in his grave necessities. There are other preachers who, if they urge it, speak so tediously and with such expressions of amazement that they rather frighten people from prayer than draw them to it, and damp their hearers' courage rather than attract their hearts. There is nothing that

[1] S. Luke xviii.

[2] Gerson was born at Rheims in 1363, died in 1429. He took part in the Council of Constance and tried to bring the Western schism to an end. He advocated catechetical instruction for children and wrote several theological works, but not the *Imitation of Christ*, which has sometimes been ascribed to him. He composed a catechism for the young.

Holy Scripture recommends more strongly or that the saints have practised and preached with greater zeal than prayer, but we so misrepresent and condemn it, that anyone who recommends it is hated.

We conclude from this that not even married people should be dissuaded from prayer ; but if they wish to practise it or devote themselves to it, they should for a time give up their married life to watch in prayer, which according to the gloss is an elevation of the soul to God that is not denied them.

CHAPTER II

OF HOW WE MUST HELP OTHERS

THOUGH, as we have seen, we ought to teach everyone and make recollection known to all faithful Christians who wish to practise it, for, as Gerson says, it can harm no one and help many, some people argue that a man should not make manifest the gift he has received, for it is written : ' It is good to hide the secret of a king.'[1] The former objectors say this practice should not be taught to seculars ; the latter maintain that if God has shown his grace to anyone respecting recollection, he should conceal it and be silent, for if people want to learn about the subject, they should search for books written on it, or ask God who gives to all in abundance, but the recollected person should not reveal the secret God has manifested to him nor instruct anyone else on this subject, for there are others who suffice for that. This last error is worse than the first, since there are less grounds for defence, and as I have seen quite as many persons misled by it, I wish to give some reasons to the contrary.

Evidently, if someone does us a favour and charges us to tell no one, we ought to be silent ; but if, on a certain occasion, he would be injured by his kindness remaining unknown, no doubt we should be false and ungrateful if we kept it secret. Rather, we should be bound to reveal it, even though it injured ourselves, lest we should fall into the detestable vice of ingratitude.

Every right-minded man will recognize the truth of this, and, as regards the present case, will own that all good things we receive come from the hand of God ; also that God commands us in many parts of Holy Scripture to conceal his gifts which he bestows in secret and very hiddenly, giving us to understand that we must not disclose them, and if needs be, must keep them locked up

[1] Tob. xii, 7.

under seven seals that no one can open. But if, by revealing such desires, we should render God service, it would be base ingratitude not to do so. If Holy Scripture bids us be silent about them, it means when their manifestation would not give God glory, as perhaps the angel felt when he said to Tobias: 'It is good to hide the secret of a king: but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God.' The holy angel clearly shows that we ought not to manifest the divine works until God himself does so, except when it would render him glory and praise. You will know that it does this when you see that it profits his servants, for God cannot himself receive honour from us because he has no need of our goods, but when we benefit his servants, he reckons it as honour done to him, especially when with the highest charity we communicate his gifts to them.

It is very foolish and no small a defect in spiritual persons to think that God came solely to dwell with them, while in fact, he may only be passing on his way elsewhere, as he may have thought well to do. He who receives the divine gift ought to believe that God is going much farther on, and has probably a long journey still to take. Therefore that soul must not hinder him by hiding his grace if its neighbour would be helped by hearing of it, as God is going to him as well. For if that soul conceals the grace, there will fall upon it the curse of which the wise man speaks: 'The soul which blesseth shall be made fat: and he that inebriateth, shall be inebriated also himself. He that hideth up corn, shall be cursed among the people: but blessing shall be upon the head of them that sell.'[1]

Heavenly gifts are called corn because they descend to us through the merits of him whom the Gospel terms 'the grain of wheat,' which does not fail to spring and multiply in good ground, that is, the heart of the just. This corn, the grace communicated to you, should not be sold except for the price of the imitation and fruit that you feel it produces in another soul, when the blessing of the Lord will be upon your head, that is, your good intention, by which you will grow and be multiplied in that same grace, for as the wise man asks: 'Wisdom that is hid, and treasure that is not seen, what profit is there in them both?'[2]

He who in the time of his brother's need of help and teaching hides from him the grace he himself has received from God, shows that he is undeserving of it. As S. Augustine writes: 'Unless a man shares what he receives, let him not think he holds it rightly, if it be not a thing that would be injured by such sharing.' S.

[1] Prov. xi, 25, 26. [2] Ecclus. xx, 32.

Gregory writes on this point : ' You ought to strive to draw others to God with you by whatever you believe has benefited you or increased your merit : long to have companions in running in the way of his commandments, and if you wish to reach the throne of his Majesty, beware lest you perish before him in solitude.' For that reason it is written in the Apocalypse : ' He that heareth, let him say : Come.'[1] As though to say : ' Let him who hears or receives into his heart the voice of sovereign Love, take care to call his brethren with the physical voice of holy counsel.' And S. Chrysostom says : ' Let all things lead us to help our brethren, for the talents we receive are nothing but the faculties bestowed on each of us, such as honours, riches, learning, and other gifts. Let no one say : " I can do no good, for I have only received one talent " ; for that suffices to win favour in heaven.'

Remember, you are not poorer than the widow who is praised in the Gospel, nor more countrified and ignorant than were SS. Peter and John, who no doubt were less learned than you are before they were enlightened, but as they showed good-will and performed all their actions for the common good, they received heaven as their reward, because nothing is so pleasing to God as devoting our lives to others. He gave us the power of speech, dexterity of hand and foot, strength of body and clearness and reasonableness of mind to be used for our own salvation and the benefit of our neighbour.

There is no cause for a law-suit or long argument on this question, for S. Paul cuts it short by his brief decision, for, ' having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better,' he declared : ' But to abide still in the flesh is needful for you.'[2] Such was his charity that he preferred, for the building up and profit of the Church, to live among the persecutions of this world rather than reign, freed from care, in heavenly glory with Jesus Christ. True and supreme union with Christ consists in doing his will, and in nothing is his will so evident as in that which tends to the good and salvation of rational creatures. For if, in secular affairs, no one lives for himself, but the official and the knight, the labourer and the financier, live for the good of the community, and their work is done for the mutual benefit of all, far more are we bound to do this in the spiritual life, which is the supreme and highest of any, for he who lives for self and despises others is an off-shoot ; in fact, I do not call him a man, nor has he any connection with humankind.

The Saint thus shows us that it is our duty to further our

[1] Apoc. xxii, 17. [2] Phil. i, 23, 24.

neighbours' salvation and to communicate to them, so far as possible, the grace we have received, instructing them in spiritual matters, so that we should feel no reluctance in telling them of the grace we have acquired by recollection. This will do them much good, for there is no doubt that living examples influence us more than those we find in books, for though we believe in the latter, we lose hopes of imitating and rivalling them, for men in the past seem to us to have been of finer mettle than we are. But if we are sure that a man we know has attained to some spiritual state, we pluck up courage to strive to win it as he has done. And so the sacred eagles, hovering over one another with outspread wings, entice each other to the flight of contemplation, for as the wise man says: 'A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city.'[1]

This is clearly exemplified in the case of S. Thomas, to whom the other Apostles told how they had seen our Lord and received the Holy Ghost by the miraculous breath from his mouth, by which the heart of the unstable Apostle was fortified and prepared to see Christ.

We find that when our Lady had conceived our Lord, she visited S. Elizabeth, partly, as S. Ambrose says, in order to share with her the graces she had received, which she did abundantly.

Therefore let everyone who has received special gifts from God know that, as S. Paul says, they have not been bestowed upon him for his own sake solely, but for the good of others also, since the Church, which is made after the model of the celestial tabernacle of the Mount of glory, holds the communion of saints as an article of faith. To a certain extent, the same order is kept here: as the superior angels purify, enlighten, and make perfect those inferior to them, so the just on earth train those less advanced who submit to them, and if they fail to do so, they do not carry their belief into practice.

You see how, as our Letter counsels, you must teach others: besides this you must, by your instruction and example, make teachers of those who wish for and are capable of the office. You have also seen that you must not hide the grace bestowed on you when its manifestation would give glory to God. I will add that you must observe the second part of the Letter which bids you love those you instruct and pray specially for them, because unless God gives interior grace corresponding to your exterior speech, your efforts to teach this exercise will be useless. But if you love your disciples tenderly and intercede for them, begging God to

[1] Prov. xviii, 19.

put pith and marrow into your words, doubt not, but firmly believe that you will be helpful, especially if you turn to the one, which is the final clause of this Letter. You must understand this as advising you not so to give yourself to others as to injure yourself, but to turn to your heart, and if you see that your former grace and recollection are diminishing, you should so behave as not to injure your soul ; otherwise, you will drop more than you gather and lose more than you gain. How many who practise recollection forfeit what they held through teaching others and not ordering rightly their charity, which ought to begin at home !

No doubt many are like leaking jars which let the water that was wanted run away. Then they weep with Job, saying : ' Who will grant me, that I might be according to the months past, according to the days in which God kept me ? When his lamp shined over my head, and I walked by his light in darkness ? As I was in the days of my youth, when God was secretly in my tabernacle ? When the Almighty was with me : and my servants round about me ? When I washed my feet with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil ? '[1]

A man often finds that he was better in the first days or months in which he practised this exercise, which Job calls his ' youth.' The fervour and energy usual in beginners having passed, are succeeded by a tepidity that seems like the weariness of old age in which the soul is bereft of the spiritual graces of which Job speaks symbolically.

CHAPTER III

WE MUST IMITATE OTHER PEOPLE'S VIRTUES

In the second explanation of this Letter, the meaning is : ' Take everyone as your teacher,' that is, learn something from everyone, each one being your pattern for some virtue. At the same time, withdraw from their company whenever possible : not out of enmity, for you should not withdraw your good-will and love from them, but in respect to familiarity and quarrelling. You should be intimate with one whom you feel is congenial to you ; this is what the wise man must have meant when he said : ' Be in peace with many, but let one in a thousand be thy counsellor.'[2]

He who has the simple eyes of a dove, watches others benevolently, not maliciously. Regard no one severely or contemptuously, and take no notice of the almost inevitable weaknesses of

[1] Job xxix, 2–6. [2] Ecclus. vi, 6.

human nature. Overlook the faults of others and do not notice them ; pretend not to have seen them, for they are frailties common to all of us, which hardly exist except in the imagination of those who attend to what should be no business of theirs. You must not fancy that men are angels or insensible to pain, and if you see what ought not to be, do not set yourself up as a judge of other people's affairs nor attend to what can do you no good. If we attentively and impartially consider others, we shall hardly find anyone in the world who has not some good quality from which we may learn ; and if even the wicked are able to help us in this way, how far more will good people profit us !

We know for certain that our Lord declared that the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light,[1] and we should do well to imitate them by being as zealous for good as they are for evil. So that you ought to take even sinners as your teachers and examples, since you are bidden to look at the ant. Be careful to punish in yourself the vices you see in them, though it is safer to look at nothing in others but their virtues.[2] Therefore, see the good in others, and when you witness special virtue, imitate and praise it. One person excels in meekness, another in poverty of spirit, others in prudence, self-contempt, or diligence and readiness in well-doing, friendliness, fasting and abstinence, good behaviour and modesty, kindness and compassion, or charity, and you will see that the virtues shared among men as good influences are among precious stones.

You must take everyone for your teacher as regards these virtues ; consider people as mirrors in which they are reflected, and by piously imitating the special excellence of each you will believe everyone is good. Do not think of how you surpass another, but of how he surpasses you, making him your master on this point and placing him above yourself. But if you cease to see the good in your neighbour, even if he has but one good quality, and look upon the defects and sins of others, which, God knows, are many enough, you will become like him who, not judging rightly, but blinded by passion and soured by persecution, though zealous for what was right, said to God : ' With zeal

[1] S. Luke xvi, 8.

[2] In a letter written in 1581 to a nun who wished to become a Discalced Carmelite, S. Teresa says that she should remain where she is and resolve to live as though she were alone with God in the house, and unless her office required it she should not concern herself about anything else ; that she should notice the virtue she saw in each sister for the sake of loving her and imitating it, and should pay no attention to her faults (*Letters of S. Teresa*, vol. iv, letter 420).

have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts : because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant : they have destroyed thy altars, they have slain thy prophets with the sword, and I alone am left, and they seek my life to take it away.' God answered him, partly to console him by giving him companions and partly to blame him for thinking he was the only one who acted rightly : ' I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal.'[1] The fervent zeal of Elias made him think that he was the only man left who did right, but God, who sees men's hearts, told him there were seven thousand more, though they were unknown. This should warn us not to suppose that everyone has deteriorated and left the right path. As I said, let us hold them all as our instructors, and if anyone practises a different exercise from yours and you do not approve of it, or if he dislikes your mode of devotion, and your characters and manners do not agree, do not associate with him. But do not withdraw your love from him, for if you invest your charity as stock in his merchandise, you will gain greatly.

I warn you not to cultivate a spirit of opposition or to find fault with whatever you do not practise yourself, for there are many gateways to the spiritual Jerusalem, as S. John says, and many windows to which the doves fly ; and numerous are the grated casements from which the coming of the Bridegroom is watched for. The Church is compared in Holy Scripture to a pomegranate, because under its outer covering it has numerous separate cells with white pellicles that represent the various exercises or practices under the same (spiritual) light. Several who use them call theirs the way of God, and all, as the prophet says, weep because others do not travel by them to obtain the grace of God, though it would be much better if they rejoiced at souls following the other paths as well. The different ways are the diverse exercises ; let each person choose which he likes ; do not hinder him or suppose that he is wrong because he does not go by yours : want of progress is not caused by the exercises but by those that practise them. Listen to the blessed Bernard, who counsels you : ' Take heed, servant of God, lest you may be seen to reprove what you do not wish to imitate. . . .

' I do not wish you to think that the common light of day shines in your cell only ; that there is no fine weather except in your neighbourhood, or that the grace of God works solely in your conscience.'

The principal point on which those err who call themselves

[1] 3 Kings xix, 14, 18.

spiritual is in discussing and comparing the practice of devotion to the sacred Passion and that of recollection in order to prove which is the better. It is as great a mistake as to contrast the two S. Johns who symbolized these exercises. Would to God that we imitated the lesser of the two without making comparisons detestable to God, who does not wish that any good practice should be abandoned, and approves of all of them, granting by their means an abundance of grace.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE NECESSITY OF BEING A DISCIPLE

THOUGH all contemplatives may seem good to you and you look up to them as masters, you should choose one who seems best suited to you. All worldly arts and sciences require a teacher, for no one is born already taught except the Son of the Virgin, and even he was taught all things by his Father before time began, when he was begotten. Mortals in this world need a teacher to instruct their ignorance. If you wish to learn recollection, do not wait for God to teach it to you, though he has taught many, for it would be rash of you to hope for his doing so without the use of any other means. You should make careful use of every expedient; and yet, though you may make every effort and may have the best teacher in the world, chosen from among a thousand, you cannot dispense with the aid of God. But setting him aside (and he is always ready to help those who help themselves), you must know that there is nothing in the world, either work, or science, or business, or art, or any other thing, however skilful, that stands in such necessity of being taught as does recollection,[1] though there is no employment about which a master can teach so little. Yet a teacher is needed sorely, for the sight of one who

[1] S. Teresa, speaking of the need of a director for prayer, says: 'He who begins is in need of instruction, whereby he may understand what profits him most. Therefore he should have a director who ought to be experienced, otherwise he will make many mistakes, and direct a soul without understanding its ways or suffering it to understand itself. . . . So that it is of great consequence that the director should be prudent—I mean, of sound understanding—and a man of experience. If in addition to this he is learned, it is a very great matter. But if these three qualities cannot be had together, the first two are the most important, because learned men may be found with whom we can communicate when necessary. For the beginners, learned men are of little use if they are not men of prayer' (*Life*, xiii).

practises it moves the heart far more, and instructs better than books, because what the pen cannot tell by circuitous, symbolic modes of speech, you will understand from your master, if he is competent, and when you pray, the heavenly Teacher will raise you up and give you to taste what the other describes. First there must be the human master, then the divine, for the former gives you the ordinary maxims by which he does all that is in his power, and God supplies what is wanting on his part. This was the case when Tobias, as a last farewell, said to his son : ' Seek counsel always of a wise man. Bless God at all times : and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him.'[1]

First the father tells his son to seek the counsel of a wise man earnestly (which is very necessary in this practice, in order to bless God at all times), and then to ask God to direct his ways, that is, the desires by which the soul goes to him. The ' ways ' will be more direct when the soul is recollected and withdrawn from all creatures, for they are a circuitous route by which to come to God, and this we cut short by recollection, though not without labour.

Tobias adds ' that all thy counsels may abide in him.' This is the case with one whose whole study consists in inquiring and seeking how to come as near as possible to God, and who seeks for one who can teach him how to attain his wish and counsel him rightly.[2] Of such as these, the sage says : ' Joy followeth them that take counsels of peace.'[3] This refers to the master and his disciple who rejoice in the Holy Ghost, for the conscience of both master and pupil will feel a spiritual joy and pleasure if the teacher knows that God is giving his grace to the disciple. This delights him more than if he received it himself, for then he does

[1] Tob. iv, 19, 20.

[2] ' It is of the utmost importance for the beginner to associate with those who lead a spiritual life, and not only with those in the same mansion as herself, but with others who have travelled farther into the castle, who will aid her greatly and draw her to join them ' (*Castle*, M. ii, ch. i, 12).

' I would advise those who give themselves to prayer, particularly at first, to form friendships and converse familiarly with others who are doing the same thing. It is a matter of the last importance. . . . I believe that he who, humbling himself, though strong, trusts not in himself and trusts another who has had experience, will lose nothing. Of myself I may say that if our Lord had not revealed to me this truth and given me the opportunity of speaking very frequently to those given to prayer, I should have gone on rising and falling until I tumbled into hell ' (*Life*, ch. vii, also chs. xvi, xxx).

[3] Prov. xii, 20.

indeed understand the words of S. Paul that 'charity seeketh not her own . . . but rejoiceth in the truth.'[1]

When the master and the disciple suit one another and God aids them by reinforcing the former's wise advice, which the pupil humbly follows, a love and awe arise in the heart of the latter for his master which almost resembles that he feels for God,[2] and which sometimes make him tremble before his teacher, though the latter may be the meekest man in the world. The beginner himself is astonished at the reverence he feels. This has no human origin nor is it produced or acquired by either party, but as the disciple makes progress in recollection, his fear increases of displeasing his master in what affects the practice. His love is so strong that the very sight of his teacher moves his heart to devotion to our Lord, while his intense reverence makes him obey the master almost as though he were God. Hence the master's counsels are imprinted in the disciple's heart so long as he lives, according to the words of the wise man: 'Joy followeth them that take counsels of peace.'[3] From the sweetness derived by the disciple from God through the good counsels of the teacher follows what has been described: if this is lost, the rest is lost with it, but the pupil feels such shame in the presence of his master that he dare not look him in the face.

Unless the disciple loves his master more than his father or mother or anyone else, let him not think he knows what it is to have one who teaches him recollection. Possibly the one who teaches may be at fault, for unless he reaches the vein of the heart of his pupil, he cannot draw from it the blood of love and fear of which I spoke. Perhaps the disciple may be to blame, especially if he is a double-minded person who is trying the exercise as an experiment, never becomes submissive, defends his own opinion, and instead of trusting his master, puts himself on the same level. If he perseveres, it is only as a sort of compliment to his teacher;

[1] 1 Cor. xiii, 5, 6.

[2] Of affection for confessors, S. Teresa says: 'An entirely spiritual love, free from any sort of affection or natural tenderness . . . exercised with moderation and discretion, is profitable in every way, particularly when borne towards holy people or confessors, for that which seems wholly natural is then changed into virtue. . . . If we feel friendship for those who benefit our bodies, why should we not feel as great a friendship for those who strive and labour to benefit our souls? On the contrary, I think a liking for my confessor is a great help to my progress if he is holy and spiritual, and if I see that he endeavours to profit my soul' (*Camino*, ch. iv).

[3] Prov. xii, 20. The Spanish gives: 'That which is sweet dwells in moderation of counsels.'

he compares opinions and criticizes what is holy; does not faithfully obey the orders given him; asks questions out of curiosity and does not listen to what is said or conform himself to it; he is remiss at prayer and concerns himself with affairs that do him no good. Such a person is no disciple of recollection, though he may think he is; it is of such as he that it is written: 'The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful.'[1]

If you sincerely wish to be a learner of recollection, you must be so truly or not at all, and must forsake all else before you begin; for if you commence and turn back, it will cost you dear; as in my experience, those who at one time were recollected and gave it up, always turned out very badly if they relinquished the practice without a good reason. But if you intend to become recollected, it is very necessary that you should first become the pupil of someone who knows how to teach you the exercise. If you do not believe this, listen to what a saint says on the matter:

'It must be said that a man attains more easily and quickly to perfection if he keeps to one master as his guide to recollection whom he must implicitly obey both in small and great things. He will thus reach perfection in a shorter time than will another who, though he has a clearer mind and many books in which the subject is fully treated, will not be instructed by a teacher. I go further and say that God will never bestow his grace (without which we can do nothing) on one who has a master who could guide him yet will not listen to his advice, believing that he suffices for himself and that he can search for and find all he needs.

'The path of obedience is a royal road which leads men without stumbling to the top of the stairs that approach God. By this way all the fathers of the desert mounted: all those who attained perfection travelled by it, except those whom God himself taught, by a privilege of special grace, because they had no one to instruct them by word of mouth. In such a case, divine Mercy supplies what is wanting outwardly by his interior guidance if it is asked of him with a humble, fervent heart.'

These are the words of a saint. Therefore, if you wish to practise recollection, do not disdain to be a disciple, though you may be old and the teacher is young; for I can assure you that I knew a man of seventy who thus subjected himself to one less than twenty-seven years old, and God repaid him generously for his humility.

I particularly recommend you, if you become a pupil, to notice whatever happens to you regarding recollection and to give an

[1] Wisdom i, 5

account of it to your master, however insignificant it may be, that he may tell you what it is and how you must behave in future in order to retain it; or if it is not good, how you must avoid and guard against it. I further advise you, if you find such a teacher, to subject yourself to him with great humility and to trust to what he says relating to recollection, if he is experienced. If you do this, he will imprint his spirit and good customs on you; and even, by the grace of God, you will in time resemble him in the graces and interior favours he receives. But you must give yourself into his skilful hands like soft wax or well-kneaded clay, that he may do whatever he likes with you.

In order that you may believe what I say, I assure you that I knew a youth who decided to follow, so far as possible, the advice of a saintly old man about recollection, and questioned him every day on the fresh subjects he explained. At the end of a year there was hardly a grace the elder had received from God of which the younger had not had some experience in his soul, taking his master as his model. I think that this was chiefly on account of the merits of his holy guide.

CHAPTER V

THE ADVANTAGES OF HAVING A TEACHER

It only remains now for us to speak of the master and of what he ought to be, for this is the key to all we have said, and even the key to the well-being of all the religious Orders in the Church. There is no doubt that, as a rule, good masters produce good pupils, who after the death of their elders succeed them and people their Orders. These pupils are careful that those who enter later on shall be instructed as they were themselves, so as to resemble their predecessors. Since the novices will in time form the community and rule over it and they come to carry on the spirit of the Order, the chief care and provision of the superiors should be that those who enter should be instructed in the chief aim and marrow of the religious life, which is to attain to the presence and action of the Holy Ghost in their heart and to pray to him with a pure heart. This ought to be the supreme longing of every religious in the world; for this end all Orders were founded, and all other aims without this are of little use; for if the foundation is faulty, what is built on it can never be good.

If the spirit of devotion is the main foundation of the religious life, undoubtedly those who teach it, that is, those charged to form

and instruct the novices, are founders of their Order which they continually found (and as it were renew) by preserving it and implanting in it freshly those who will in future implant others taught in the same way as they themselves were.

I say this to show such persons what their task means, and especially that the superiors may realize it when they put them in the office and may be very vigilant as regards that which, as we have seen, so affects the religious life, since the welfare of the Orders depends wholly on their choice. To tell the truth, I find after profound consideration, that the matter which requires the closest examination and most mature deliberation in religious houses is the choice of those charged with training and teaching the hearts of the novices. In nothing can either wisdom or bad judgement be shown so plainly, nor is there anything on which, for good or ill, so much depends. If all the other superiors make mistakes, there would be many to remonstrate, and their subjects would not fall so quickly into error but that the matter would soon be set right. But in the former case, it is difficult to rectify what has been imperfect from the beginning, nor is there anyone to speak about it, for he who ought to appeal does not know right from wrong as do the seniors. I say that he does harm who is not skilful in this case, for it does not suffice to fulfil the office without sin, but it must be conducted with the greatest perfection. Otherwise the religious will build on sand, or on the foundation used by upright men in other states of life which consists in moral probability and a conjecture that an action is good. But by this you teach nothing, for the novice you train acted thus before he entered religion.

S. Bernard says that he who does not advance on the way to God, turns back, and I maintain that, in the present case, not to instruct new-comers in spiritual matters is to injure them and to bring them up wrongly on a false basis. After duly considering the matter, I find that the choice for this charge requires greater examination than that of superiors, preachers, confessors, or vicars. I mention the superiors, for nowadays they throw off this burden from their shoulders and commit it to another, though they should see to it themselves, though they do not interfere with this as with the other offices but give it to another. The fault does not lie in this but in their choice of a master, for if all the other charges are laid upon those who have some ability and experience, this, as I said, is the foundation of the religious life and should be minutely examined into, for such a master or masters have to train persons who will later on hold all the offices of the Order. Indeed, they

are training the Order itself, which in the novices is a child and has to grow up to maintain the Order in the world. Therefore there is urgent need that superiors should examine the matter and earnestly seek for competent persons. Let them imagine that the founder of the Order says to them as the king said to Joseph, when the former presented his brothers to him : ' If thou knewest that there are industrious men among them, make them rulers over my cattle.'[1] It is the office of the superior to present his subjects to the king, that is, to the founder and father of his Order.

The founders and saints who instituted religious Orders are kings, and Christ is their King. The superior is bound to teach his subjects that they ought to be, as it were, his brothers in the sight of the Father of their Order by whose Rule they are governed. He is called their king, because this title is given to those who rule, and for that purpose they were formerly elected.[2]

No doubt the first charge the founders would have laid upon the superiors would be to provide specially for the lambs of the flock by giving them zealous teachers, as Christ did when he bade S. Peter ' feed his lambs.' If those who come newly to the Faith must be with special care pastured on true doctrine, as Christ showed by his command given to S. Peter, there cannot fail to be a deep mystery in his recommending this to the superior, who is set over his kingdom, that is, his Order, in his place and as his representative, as Joseph was over the kingdom of Egypt by its king.

In right reason, the first recommendation would be that the superior should seek for masters to tend the lambs of the Lord, the novices, who must be diligently provided with capable teachers who will by their strenuous efforts feed the new-comers on the pasture of interior devotion, striving to accomplish this with all their strength as their conscience bids them. When I say ' conscience,' I refer to those who have an upright conscience and listen to it when they ought.

Many things are implied in this brief command to superiors to be vigilant in this matter. First, we must notice that it is not addressed to the minor superiors, but to the chief ; for the minors, unless they are changeable, only have to elect one official, but the chief has to choose many. This admonition is directed to them, principally to induce them to choose the best masters from among the number, for as the wise man says : ' Choose one among a

[1] Gen. xlvii, 6.

[2] The Spanish gives *rey* and *regir ;* the play upon words would be better shown by translating the words by ' ruler ' and ' rule '

thousand.' To tell the truth, it is no trifling task to choose one from among twenty or thirty. I say this, not because among the number there would not be one who was good (for it would be a mistake to imagine such a thing), but because the grace to teach spiritual matters is a special gift not bestowed on all the just ; but God, who divides his gifts as he pleases, gives it to whom he thinks good.

Many are good in themselves, but do not know how to teach others spiritual justice and interior prayer. I was much pleased with what I heard said by a saintly man of great experience in religious matters. He said that if in any place a person was found capable of teaching these things, he ought to be taken to all the religious houses in the province to teach his brethren, to the best of his ability, spiritual doctrine concerning prayer. I know a province in which this was done, and those who at first did not approve of it learnt later on how beneficial it is and praise God for it heartily.

Some may object that this grace cannot easily be discerned in one who owns it, therefore this course cannot practically be taken. To this the most Christian Gerson replies that a religious is strictly bound to tell the whole truth to his superior when questioned by him as to the interior graces communicated to him by God, and to answer fully all the questions asked him on the subject, so that the superior may dispose of these goods of the Order for its welfare and the common weal of the friars. And I believe that the superior, as he is bound to be solicitous in spiritual matters, is obliged to know and inquire on this subject, so that the Order may use and profit by these graces which belong to it, and are given more for its benefit than for the personal good of the religious who receives them. This is very spiritually and profoundly explained by the blessed S. Paul, who speaks of the service and help rendered by the members to one another. Hence it is a certain truth that as the feet do not walk for themselves but for the whole body, and the eyes do not see for their own sake but for that of the whole man, so religious who receive special gifts from God should not hide them nor consider them as their private property, but as that of the whole Order, which should benefit by them.

Superiors should inquire about these graces diligently and secretly in preference to the revenues, for they are far more important as they concern souls, and money matters concern bodies. That this spiritual examination should not be hasty or conducted like other matters, but in a familiar manner and by a long course

of observation, is shown by the king's words to Joseph : ' If thou knewest '—not ' if thou knowest now '—but, ' if thou knewest in time past.'[1]

This examination of the teachers must not be made unexpectedly and hurriedly, but by long intercourse during which the superior diligently studies the inner character of his flock, for as regards this and all other offices, he ought to remember the words S. Paul wrote to Timothy : ' Impose not hands lightly upon any man.'[2]

Superiors are to blame for not being intimate with the devout religious : they see little of them and seem to avoid them, seeking rather the society of the officials and those who have aptitude for exterior work. They take little notice of those remarkable for recollection, seeing that the latter give them no trouble and do not importune them, for they confine themselves wholly to importuning God, seeking him and begging and crying at the door of his mercy. If the superiors leave these religious alone and do not speak to them in order not to disturb them and to let them be at peace, they do well. But if they do so lest they should be shamed by the contrast between them, like that between frieze and crimson silk, it is extremely wrong of them, for it is men with such characters they should choose as confessors and advisers, have a special love for them and favour them in what is right, not allowing the other gnats to make themselves heard above these camels.

CHAPTER VI

OF WHAT AGE THE MASTER SHOULD BE

YOU must notice that I have not said the master must be of mature age, though this seems suitable in one who has to teach others. As I said, the first requisite is grace, and if mature age is added to it, so much the better. But if grey hairs are wanting, this does not make a man unsuitable, for the most venerable age consists in good actions, and goodness ought to take the place of advanced years. The peaceful king is an example of this : ' For he, seeing a youth who was well-trained and industrious, had made him president.'

Although many qualities are requisite, yet if they were all enumerated it would seem to disqualify everyone for the office.

[1] The Spanish gives the past tense for ' know,' not the present as in the Douai Bible.

[2] 1 Tim. v, 22.

I will only make mention of one now, leaving the rest to the judgement of him whose charge it is to provide the teacher, a matter for which he will have to render a strict account to God if he does not do his duty and will be amply rewarded if he acts rightly, not only by God but by those who have been well taught, who will bless him for it daily.

If you seek a master, take every lawful means of ascertaining whether he is experienced and has passed through what he has to teach you. If not, though he may know everything else, and may have practised all the other exercises, have nothing to do with him in this matter, for he will recite badly the chant he does not know. For as one who is ignorant of painting cannot make an artist of you, so he who has never been recollected cannot counsel you about recollection ; in fact, I assure you that he will do you much harm by giving you mistaken advice. Though he may say much, as it does not come from the abundance of his heart, it will not touch your heart, to which it ought to appeal. If you wish to be told why, you must know that, in this exercise, it is the disciple who speaks most. He asks about the many doubts that occur to him and describes what he feels in order to know what it is. The master should answer his heart rather than his words : rather what he is trying to say than what he says, for he cannot fully explain what he wants to know. One who has himself passed through this state understands at once from the first three words, confused as they may be, and though the disciple says he cannot explain himself. The master explains how he should put the question, how such things are usually felt, and the way in which they come to the soul. At other times the pupil wishes to ask a question and does not know how to describe his feelings : then a wise and experienced teacher will speak to him of what is generally undergone by persons in his state. If the learner is a beginner or proficient, the master will say what usually happens to those in his stage. He will also consider many other circumstances that must be reckoned with, such as the learner's character, which will sometimes mislead him, making him take for grace what is natural. The master will consider what kind of grace the disciple has received hitherto, for its greater or lesser intensity may make it seem different, though it is the same. He will also take into account the pupil's employment or state of life, for things happen to those who practise recollection that do not relate to it, though they are good in themselves, but arise from some other cause. There are many other matters that a wise and prudent master should consider in order to answer and teach his

disciple. These replies, when rightly given and derived from experience, imprint themselves on the heart of the inquirer, who knows that such a satisfactory explanation comes from one who has himself passed through such states, and says, like Solomon: 'The learned in word shall find good things: . . . The wise in heart shall be called prudent: and he that is sweet in words shall attain to greater things. Knowledge is a fount of life to him that possesseth it.'[1]

He who, though not recollected himself, presumes to teach recollection solely because he has read about it, is not a fount of life-giving doctrine, for what he teaches orally does not work within him, nor is he wise of heart, for his heart does not taste the sweetness that comes from his lips. He is not prudent but rash, since he dares to teach what he does not wish to practise, which, in this case, is worse than in any other matter. Let such a man remember the Apostle's words: 'I dare not speak of any of those things which Christ worketh not by me.'[2] Some people have grace of one kind, some of another: Christ gives divers virtues to souls. Let each one speak of what Christ works in him and yield the preference to others as regards the rest, or own that he only knows what he has read about them. I knew a very learned Doctor of Theology, no less humble than erudite, who was discussing recollection one day with a man who though very simple was extremely recollected. The Doctor, after having spoken excellently on the subject, said: 'You know this better than I do, for you know how it tastes, while I have only set forth what I have read. It does not make much impression on me; but I believe it will on you by exciting your desire for more of the consolations you have received in the past.'

The disciple's confidence in his master will help him immensely if he knows his teacher has experienced what he teaches, and one such instance will move him more, if it is faithfully related, than would any number he found in a book. Examples told of ancient times rather terrify than help the simple, for they think that those who lived then were super-human and that men are weaklings nowadays; but if they see that the latter obtain favours from God, they suppose they will do so also.

The disciple also gains much confidence by hearing his master tell how happy he has been since he practised this exercise, for it makes him eager to imitate his teacher in the hope that God will grant him the same favours. I knew a man who, in order to induce another to become recollected, resolved to make known to him

[1] Prov. xvi, 20, 22. [2] Rom. xv, 18.

the blessings it had brought so that he prized it above the whole world, even though he might lawfully possess it forever. He declared that he would not believe the praise he heard of this practice unless he knew it on his own account, so that he no longer held it by faith but by experience. His friend, who thought these words were true, as in fact they were, began humbly to imitate him. A few days after I heard the master tell his new disciple, after spending an hour in prayer : ' Even if our Lord were to give me no more for the services I have rendered him than what he has bestowed in the hour I have been here, he would have amply repaid me ; and if I served him from this moment until the day of judgement, and he granted me such another grace, I should be well rewarded, though I expect much more from him.' Later on I heard the pupil tell his teacher in my presence regarding the splendid promises the latter had made him should he persevere in recollecting himself : ' Father, you are acquitted of all you promised me : I am perfectly satisfied : you are in no way a defaulter. God has fulfilled your promises in me. Henceforth you will be acquitted, though I may not retain what he has given me.'[1]

I have told you of these examples to show you how, if your master is experienced, he will encourage you and incite you by various means to continue ; if you are timid, he will strengthen you ; and even if the will to persevere is dead, he will resuscitate it. If you are sad, he will give you a remedy and will set you an example by praying before you and for you. While he speaks, you will know he prays and is recollected by the outward signs you see of what is within. Thus you will be strongly urged to the practice, but a teacher without experience could only encourage you by words.

[1] Of those who feel a supernatural love for us, S. Teresa says : ' O my God ! of thy mercy grant that many may feel such love for me. I would far rather win it than the liking of all the kings and princes of the earth, and rightly so, for this affection labours with all its might to make us such that we may spurn the world under our feet and may hold beneath our sway all that it contains. Love such persons as much as you will : there are not many such souls. . . . People will tell you that there is no need of such help—God is enough. The company of God's friend is a good way of keeping near him : it is of the greatest advantage, as I know from experience ; for after God himself, I owe it to such persons that I am not in hell ' (*Camino*, ch. vii).

CHAPTER VII

THAT EXPERIENCE IS MOST NECESSARY FOR A MASTER

WITH all the good qualities in the world, a man without experience is hardly equal to one who possesses that and nothing else. ' No price is worthy of a continent soul,'[1] that is to say a soul that contains within it divine grace. For no doubt this grace comes forth in speech as the Psalm says : ' O Lord, thou wilt open my lips.'[2] Everyone knows that the words of one who is moved by some strong passion within him have special power to arouse the same feeling in others. When one who is very sad speaks of mournful subjects, he seems to arouse the same sorrow and weariness in his hearers, who grieve with him. But if he speaks of such things without being melancholy himself, his listeners are not half so much moved by him. The sermon of a preacher on the death of one for whom he cares little raises the sympathy of his congregation far less than when he grieves for the death of which he talks. Strong feeling on a subject gives great force to one's words, above all when they relate to recollection, for Solomon says : ' The words of the wise are as goads and as nails deeply fastened in, which by the counsel of masters are given from one shepherd.'[3]

Those are most truly called masters in Holy Scripture who know the taste of the spirit of devotion, and with knowledge have taste as well. Their words are like goads to the slothful and as nails fastened in the exalted heart of those who relish the things of God. These words come from our shepherd and Lord who gives them to us by means of fitting masters.

He who seeks to be a good master must not forget self, but must be very earnest about his own progress, for as a great authority says : A man will profit others to the same extent as he profits himself. If he neglects self in order to understand their case, all will be lost and there will be very little result. What you have to give to others is the remains or leavings of the food of ' the peaceful man ' that your soul should be : but if you have not abundance within you, silence is best lest whatever you have should go forth from you. Take example by Ruth, who, ' after she had been filled ' at the meal to which Booz invited her, gave the remains of her meat to Naomi.[4] If God invites you, feed your own soul first before you provide for others. You must give what

[1] Ecclus. xxvi, 20.
[2] Ps. l, 17.
[3] Eccles. xii, 11.
[4] Ruth ii.

is over to the poor; your alms should come from the surplus, not from what you require, as the foster-mother nourishes the babe from her superfluity, that is, her milk, not from what she needs to keep her alive and well.

In all other sciences and practices one who knows a little increases his knowledge by teaching others, but this is not so regarding recollection, for as many have found by experience, all who with a slight feeling of devotion seek to profit others, injure themselves. The reason is that this restricted devotion requires great care to preserve and increase it, and when men divide their attention by trying to guide and instruct others, their hearts do not receive nearly sufficient attention, as they realize when they have lost their devotion by speaking about it.

Do not seek, Brother, to be a master until you have become a good disciple and possess, as you should, great abundance of what you desire to impart; or you will be like the young fledglings who think they can fly and take their flight before the time, fluttering out of the nest: but they soon grow tired and fall and cannot return to their peaceful home that they have left because they began to soar before their wings were strong. But you will tell me that obedience made you a teacher; it may give you the office, but cannot give you the ability, for this is from above and comes from the Father of mankind. I believe that you are bound to reply sincerely to those who lay the duty on you that you have not the experience needed to perform it well. If your superiors persist, you must obey them as you do in other matters, and no harm will result to you, on the condition that you force yourself to say what you feel about yourself, and judge yourself justly. When this is done, the blame will lie with those who gave the order, and the loss will be theirs whom you have to teach what you do not know.

I often feel sorry for the beginners—not because of the evil that is taught them, for, thanks to our Lord, I have never witnessed this, nor do I expect to. But I pity them because they are not instructed on high matters as our great Lord and glorious King Jesus Christ desires, and who gives the greater grace in proportion as men enlarge their hearts to receive it. When, as the Psalm says: 'man comes to a high heart' by the lofty way of deeply spiritual exercises, God is greatly exalted in him.[1] As a knight gives greater honour to a king and queen than does a squire, so he is more profitable to himself and to others and more

[1] Ps. lxiii, 7, 8. The Spanish gives 'high' instead of 'deep' in this verse.

acceptable to God who performs some high exercise, than one whose devotions are petty and childish.

Some people fancy that they satisfy God and their conconscience by reading a short portion every day of some well-written book to their disciples who they think will thus learn, not from them, but from some glorious and renowned saint whose doctrine is very spiritual and holy. Others say that on examination, this comes to nothing at all and is useless, for no teacher would be needed for this—he would only have to give his pupils the book. Such an instructor, if there is one, would be like a doctor who thought he could cure and prescribe for the patient merely by reading to him a book on medicine and doing nothing else. This would be utterly senseless, for in the old days physicians did not write books on the special treatment of individuals —either Peter or John—but for all in common, leaving it to the practitioner to apply their advice to each person as it suited him. To know how to do this is to be a clever doctor ; from this you will be able to conjecture what are your own capabilities.

CHAPTER VIII

A MATTER TO WHICH MASTERS SHOULD PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION

ONE point on which I wish to advise these masters is that their disciples should be given spiritual doctrine more fully and earnestly regarding the science for which they long, which is to find God, so that spiritual principles may take the place of the human principles they held in the world. Therefore the teacher should pay careful attention to the spirit of his disciple, giving all possible care to it, and laying less weight on what is exterior, which is useless without the rest.

For though the latter ought not to be forgotten, the master should show that he makes little account of it. The beginner, seeing this, will direct all his efforts to what passes in his heart, about which the instructor must question him narrowly and show great solicitude, never letting any time pass, however short, without asking him affectionately to render an account of it.

Do not ask him what he did at such and such a time, but what he thought about then and at all hours of the day : what was he thinking about when he went to the garden and while he worked there ; what was his mind occupied upon while he went for a walk ; even ask him what his thoughts are while he is with you. According to what he answers, you must fill his heart with fitting

subjects, so that he may always have the means for interior recollection in one way or another. You must blame him more severely for any defect in this than in exterior and corporal behaviour. Whenever you meet your disciple, you should question him as to what his mind is bent on, warning him to avoid vain and useless thoughts and other things of the kind.

Then you will resemble the good shepherd who drove his flock into the interior of the desert,[1] and so from being a shepherd of sheep, deserved to become the shepherd of men, for he pastured the people of God in the desert during forty years.

As I said, the first thing to be set right in him who is learning the spiritual life is the heart, which stands in the greatest need of help. For as the first thing that nature forms in us is the heart, it ought to be the first to be reformed by us. As S. Bonaventure says, outward destruction is the result of interior dissolution, therefore the root should begin to remedy itself so that the evil that springs from it may be cured. Pay little attention to your disciple's hands or head or eyes or feet, for from the hour that you bid him attend to interior things, the exterior members will compose themselves and follow their first principle, which is the heart. If you tell him to keep his mind fixed on God or on guarding his heart, to do this he must use a certain constraint over his soul and must be thoughtful. His limbs will not be restless, nor will he care to talk if he is striving to recollect his heart, which ought to be the first thing you exhort him to do when he enters the Order. Pay little attention to other things: they will follow with little trouble. If you insist much on what is exterior, the novice will think that is the important matter and will take little heed of what is far more so, confining his efforts to that which in itself is worthless and omitting what is the true good and gives value to the rest.

If you say that you must teach the novice the ceremonies, I do not deny it, but I ask you to believe that to teach this without the other amounts to nothing; a cat that knew how to speak and had been trained in the Order would suffice for that. Take special care to teach the beginner the ceremonies of the heart as regards God; he will learn those that are exterior by watching others and will soon master them. But those of the heart, which he cannot see, I advise you to teach him at once: how he must raise his heart to heavenly things; how he must always keep it ready for the Lord; and how to recollect himself.

The blessed S. Bernard, when writing a rule for a good life

[1] Exod. iii.

which had been asked of him, wished to impress the same advice as I have begun to give you regarding teaching. He says: 'As our doctrine proceeds from the interior to the exterior man, so you should study ceaselessly to preserve the purity of your heart in which the eternal God, Lover of purity, loves to enthrone himself as he does in heaven, and to keep it for his own, as Isaias declares: "Heaven is my throne, and the soul of the just is the throne of wisdom." Therefore you must be vigilant in keeping your thoughts bent on what is good and modest and fear to think in the divine presence of what you would rightly fear to say or do before men.' The glorious Saint tells us this to teach us to be like spiders,[1] who when they see their web is torn, begin to mend it from the centre (which in our case is the heart). From this our amendment must commence, for from thence, as from the point of the compass, we draw the lines of virtue and good inclinations to the exterior circumference of a righteous life.

It is said of spiders that they never sleep. We must resemble them in this as well, for if it were possible we should neither slumber nor sleep by being negligent, if we wish 'to keep Israel,' that is, our heart, in safety.[2] The heart is also called the sanctuary of God, from which we must first drive out evil before cleansing the outer temple.

Do not suppose that this is contradicted by the words of S. Paul: 'That was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural,'[3] for he is not speaking of this subject but of the resurrection. If it applies morally to this question, it means, as S. Bernard declares, that a man must first be cured of self-indulgent evil habits that he had in the world before his soul is spiritually reformed, so that before he enters religion he has renounced the bestial life of a sinner, and that when he begins the religious life you may start him the spiritual way as a just, reasonable man. Of this it is said that S. Bernard used to tell those who came to be religious that they must leave their bodies outside the monastery and enter into their own hearts, meaning to say that at least so far as their whole will goes, they may already be reformed in their physical, animal life, for they come there to reform their hearts.

In agreement with this, it would be sound advice for one who

[1] Ps. lxxxix, 10.

[2] The Spanish strangely quotes Ps. cxx, 4: 'He shall neither slumber nor sleep, that keepeth Israel' as referring to the spider, which is not mentioned in this Psalm and seems quite outside its meaning.

[3] 1 Cor. xv, 46.

wished to become a religious that while he was in the world and first felt this longing, he should prove himself in what he believes would be the tests when he entered, such as in the practice of the virtues, fasts, and such things. If while still a secular, he can to a certain extent persevere in any good custom, let him believe that he will persevere finally in the religious life, for he will there find greater help in many ways for becoming virtuous and fewer opportunities of failure.

I say this because I knew a person who did this and got great good from it. To conclude this letter : let no one dare to become a master unless he is experienced in the spiritual life that he is to teach, lest he and his disciple should fall into the pit of some error. Nor must you dare to begin the spiritual exercises with anyone without taking advice, for it is a dangerous thing to do, as Gerson says, quoting one of the fathers of the desert : ' If you see a youth who wishes to enter that Paradise without a teacher, though he has one foot already there, seize him by the other and throw him down, for he will never gain entrance in that way.'

Some people apply these words literally, saying that young people should be forbidden spiritual exercises ; this is not right ; they should only be withdrawn from the practices while they direct themselves, for then they are youths and boys. But when they make use of the prudent advice of experienced persons, they should be reckoned as old men, for they follow the opinion of their elders, being ruled by those pre-eminent in some virtue and opening their heart to a master whom they know to be experienced in the spiritual practices in which they wish to engage.

NINTH TREATISE

DIRECTS THAT A MAN SHOULD REPRESS TALKATIVENESS, SAYING: 'NEVER LEAVE AIMLESS WANDERING UNPUNISHED.'[1]

CHAPTER I

WE MUST REMAIN WITHIN OUR HEART AWAITING GOD'S COMING

HE would be much to blame who, when some high dignitaries were about to visit him, left his home at the time they were expected. It would appear insulting, and the guests might seek some other dwelling, leaving their indifferent host to himself, to give him a lesson and teach him to welcome those who came to honour his house by a visit. If the patriarch Abraham had not been in his tent, he would not have deserved to receive the angels who promised him a longed-for son.[2] Had Lot been negligent in welcoming pilgrims, instead of waiting for them at the gate of the city, he would not have deserved to entertain the angels who delivered him from the burning of Sodom and placed him in safety.[3] Unless Laban had been in his house, the men who were the cause of his future prosperity would not have lodged there.[4] Yet if these men were careful to stay at home and show hospitality to the guests of whose visits they had no certainty, much more should every devout soul be spiritually solicitous while awaiting to welcome within itself God, who is to be its guest.

We are certain, and know by the mouth of the Son of God himself that he and the Father and the Holy Spirit will come to dwell with one who loves them and will make their abode with him in no other place but in his soul, which is the dwelling-place of God;[5] but the man himself must be there to receive him. We know he will come, but when we know not, and to warn us, the Lord for whom we wait and are solicitous tells in the Gospel:

[1] The Spanish gives J as the ninth Letter: *Jamas pase sin castigo la salida sin provecho.*

[2] Gen. xviii. [3] Gen. xix.

[4] Gen. xxiv. [5] John xiv, 23.

'Be you then also ready, for at what hour you think not, the Son of the Virgin will come.'[1]

Our Lord kept unrevealed the hour of his coming to keep us prepared at all times. The vigilance and care with which we must await his coming to give us the consolation of his grace and manifest himself to our heart must be as solicitous, our Lord says, as that of a man who guards his house when he knows a thief is coming; he takes care to be at home and see that no one climbs through the windows.

I find one difference between this and the spiritual coming of the Lord, which, as Job says, is a visitation that preserves the spirit,[2] bringing with it all the needful means of protection. The difference is that the robber is most anxious to enter the house when its master is absent; but our Lord God, who is exceedingly courteous, does not choose to come into our heart unless we are within, awaiting him. Then, as he tells us in the Apocalypse: 'Behold, I stand at the gate and knock'[3]—at the gate of our consent with his holy inspirations—in order that we may receive him more willingly. But when a man is not recollected nor dwells within his own heart, he makes Christ stand at the door and seems to mock him while he calls to the soul in the words of the Canticles: 'Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is full of dew, and my locks of the drops of the night.'[4] He asks the soul not only to open, but to open to him, implying that it should open to none but him and should shut the secret doors and posterns by which it has gone out from itself.[5]

When a man withdraws from self by hurtful distractions, he withdraws from God, who is not the God of discord but of peace and love and unity. He calls the soul his 'sister' because of the humanity he took, by which he made himself our Brother, so that

[1] *Sic.* Luke xii, 40.
[2] Job x, 12.
[3] Apoc. iii, 20.
[4] Cant. v, 2.
[5] 'Soul, if my presence wouldst attain
Seek in thyself for me.
Because in thee I find my house of rest,
My dwelling-place, my home,
Where at all hours I come
And knock at the closed portal of thy thoughts
When far abroad they roam.
No need is there to look for me without,
Nor far in search to flee;
Promptly I come to thee;
If thou but call to me it doth suffice—
Seek in thyself for me.'
Minor Works of S. Teresa, Poem 10.

we might go to him with greater confidence and might feel more bound to receive him and might love him more naturally. Therefore the next name that he calls the soul is ' friend,' that being the most chaste friendship which exists between brethren. We open willingly to all our brothers, especially to those we love best. Our Lord applies this to himself, and means, by saying he is our Brother and Friend, that he is our dearly-loved Brother. But lest the adulterous soul, which through wrongly engaging itself in many worldly and secular affairs, has deserted God, should fear and be ashamed to return to him, seeing how often it has despised him, our Lord, to free it from timidity and bashfulness, calls it his ' dove.' Nor content with naming it a dove, as a sign that if it returns to him with humble sorrow he will take it back, he adds that it is his, so placing himself under a stricter obligation of receiving it, for no one may reject what is his own. To show how prompt and ready he will be to free it from all sin and stain of evil love, he also calls it ' undefiled.' This he says that the soul may take courage at being called undefiled by him who cannot say what is untrue, and may not hesitate to go to him who longs for it, though it is written that he ' will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins.'[1]

That which follows, besides showing how he has waited and hoped day after day for us to open our heart to him, reveals two things which should persuade us to do so. First, that the head of his Divinity is ' full of dew ' which is celestial grace, ' the dew of heaven ' mentioned in Isaac's blessing of Jacob. The second is that his ' locks,' that is, the sacred Humanity which is, as it were, the flowing hair of God, ' is full of the drops of the night,' meaning the pains of the Passion that he suffered for our sins. Hence, as he came to give us grace, showing us signal mercies, and was wearied with the trials he bore for us, we are the more bound to open the door of our heart to him, giving place to none else, enclosing and recollecting ourselves that we may the better open to him and prepare ourselves. Besides this, unless he sees that we are there, he will pass on, seeing that we are perturbed with harmful and worrying distractions. This was portrayed in S. Thomas, to whom Christ did not appear until he saw that he had joined the other Apostles and was returning to recollection.

We all know that the foolish virgins were denied the sight and welcome of the bridegroom because they went away from the right place ; and if Noah had not been in the ark and drawn the dove in the first time it returned, it might have flown away and

[1] Wisdom i, 4.

been lost to him.[1] Therefore, if we wish God to enlighten our understanding as he did that of S. Thomas and that our will should love him as our virginal Spouse as did that of the prudent virgins ; or if we long that the Holy Ghost should teach us to mourn like the dove because we cannot rise to the flight of contemplation or because the flood of our sins has not subsided, we must be recollected within ourselves and not allow ourselves to be distracted by useless thoughts or secular or worldly business. If we should do so sometimes, let us take vengeance on ourselves that the pain may be a warning to us and make us careful, as our Letter cautions us, saying : ' Never let aimless wandering remain unpunished.'

There are two kinds of going forth : the one unprofitable, the other profitable. As the former concerns our Letter more directly, we will speak of that first.

CHAPTER II

THAT A RECOLLECTED MAN SHOULD LOVE ENCLOSURE

THE exercise of recollection tolerates no going forth, for the very name teaches us that we must be very thoughtful and immersed within ourselves : so that every soul that practises recollection should be, so to say, cloistered, with his heart for his cell, with recollection for its door. We must enter by this like the snake that wishes to cast its old skin ; after having soaked itself in a stream, it passes through some narrow, rough passage to rub off its former skin. So we, having bathed seven times in the river of tears on account of the seven mortal sins, like Naaman the leper, must ' enter in at the narrow gate : for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat. How narrow is the gate, and straight is the way that leadeth to life : and few there are that find it ! '[2]

Recollection is the narrow gate through which only God and our soul which strives to enter alone with him can pass, that in this solitude it may say in the words of the Canticles : ' I to my beloved, and my beloved to me.'[3] These few words speak of the soul and God as being alone, for only they enter by this narrow gate of recollection and the Lord is there first, that the faithful soul may say the king has put it into the cellar of wine of interior consolation, where he set its love in order perfectly.

The gate and way of perdition is the contrary of recollection

[1] Gen. viii. [2] Matt. vii, 13, 14. [3] Cant. vi, 2.

and is called distraction, or wandering thoughts, which is so great an ill that being 'poured out like water' was the curse brought on Ruben for his sin and treachery against his father.[1] Hence we shall find, if we consider the matter deeply, that distraction or pouring forth of the heart is the beginning of all evils, and all who go to perdition travel there by this very wide gate and broad way, through allowing themselves to leave their imagination and heart free to wander at large throughout the world. It is from the heart, our Lord says, that come forth the blasphemies, thefts, and all the other sins[2] which would not be spoken nor performed had they not first deranged the heart. Many enter by the gate of distraction, but few by the narrow gate of recollection. 'Few there are that find it,' our Lord says, though many seek it; but perseverance will show it to us and he will lead by the hand those who seek, by this gate, to enter into themselves and find the life of grace which rests on the throne of the heart.

Those who have entered into themselves by this door ought not to go forth from God's sanctuary, but should immure and enclose themselves as strictly as possible interiorily, for they are the temple of God, as S. Paul says.[3] There they should dwell and not sally forth, as though all this life were a thirty days' jail which at death would be unlocked and they would be set free, for then our souls would be raised from this prison to praise the name of the Lord without measure.

As a figure of this spiritual enclosure that we should maintain in our heart, it is said of the saintly Josue, the son of Nun, trained by Moses, that he did not depart from the tabernacle of the Lord. Josue ascended the side of the mountain with Moses, and by the divine command succeeded him in leading the children of Israel into the land of promise, and God worked many miracles on account of his merits. Therefore he may well symbolize the recollected man, no less in other ways than in his name, for Josue means a 'Saviour,' and every man is this who saves his soul by this holy exercise of recollection, for to this exercise the words of S. Luke's Gospel may be applied: 'He that shall lose his life for my sake shall save it.'[4]

Josue was called a young man, denoting that his youth was like that of eagles, for in a short time he brought the children of Israel into the promised Land, which betokens the desires of the recollected, who by this path are raised to the interior sweetness promised them.

[1] Gen. xlix, 4.
[2] Mark vii, 21–23.
[3] 1 Cor. vi, 19.
[4] Luke ix, 24.

It is also stated that Josue was trained by Moses to show that he had a teacher for this exercise which, as I said in the last Letter, was necessary. He ascended the side of the mountain with him, showing us that the humble disciple who tries to obey and imitate his master in everything, usually comes to resemble him strongly in many ways, as was the case with Moses, and with Eliseus and Elias.

We are also told that Josue was the son of Nun, whose name means ' eternal ' or ' permanent,' for he who aims at recollection must persevere, and keep firm in his resolution and actions. The final statement concerning Josue is that he never left the tent or tabernacle of God, for a man must always strive never to go outside his own heart, reining in his thoughts and avoiding all occasions that will draw them forth. But, as at the time a man is most anxious to be recollected, his mind goes out with the greatest fury to distracting subjects, he must take care that the heart does not follow by sharing its thoughts, which often happens at once. S. Bernard deplores this. He says : ' Nothing in me is more elusive than my heart : whenever it leaves me and pursues wrong thoughts it offends God ; my heart is vain and vagrant and unstable, and when transported by its fluctuating will, lacks the divine guidance. It cannot remain stable by its own power, but is more changeful than all changeful things ; the causes that disturb it are infinite in number ; it strays hither and thither in innumerable directions, and while seeking joy in many ways, never finds it ; but while enduring misery in its search, remains empty of happiness. It is not at one with itself but discordant ; rejects self, changes its desires, alters its opinions, undertakes new enterprises, and subverts its former ones ; returning to reconstruct what it has destroyed : again and again does it alter and arrange one thing after the other, wanting a thing and not wanting it, and never remaining in one state. For as a mill revolves rapidly and rejects nothing, but grinds whatever is put into it, so my heart is ever restless and never in repose. Whether asleep or awake, it dreams and thinks over whatever occurs to it ; like the mill, if it is given grit, it crushes it ; thrashed corn soils it, straw obstructs it. So my heart is disturbed by bitter thoughts, befouled by what is unclean, made restless and wearied by vanities. Careless of the joy that is to come or of seeking divine favour, it withdraws from heavenly love, being wholly taken up with the love of worldly things. When it gets free from one thing, it enfetters itself with others, becomes vain, is led astray by curiosity, allured by its desires, deceived by pleasure, polluted by self-indulgence, tormented by envy,

disturbed by anger, wearied with sadness, and so, in deep misery, launches into all the vices, because it has abandoned God who could have satisfied it. It wastes itself on many things in all directions; seeks for where joy can be found, and never finds what it wants until it returns into itself. Its thoughts fly hither and thither: it involves itself in many occupations and affections so that variety may fill the void for which these things would be insufficient separately.

Thus is the misery of the heart revealed when deprived of divine grace. When it returns to itself, it examines its thoughts and finds nothing, for they had no solidity, but were harassing reflections about many things without foundation, which in the end mislead the imagination by means of the devil's tricks.

God bids me give him my heart, and since I am not obedient and docile to him, I rebel against and oppose myself. Therefore I cannot be subject to myself until I am subject to him, and I do not seek to render service to myself, since I do not desire to serve him. Consequently my heart makes more plans in a moment than the whole of mankind could carry out in a year. Not being united to God, I am divided within myself.'

This Saint has well described in all its details the sallying forth of the heart and how useless and even harmful it is for recollected persons. The holy Job wishes to teach us this when he says: 'Their little ones go out like a flock, and their children dance and play.'[1] Our 'little ones go out like a flock' when a disorderly troop of thoughts proceed from our heart; they are called 'little ones' because they have neither order nor agreement between them, and it would be well if we punished them by dashing them against the rock which is Christ.[2] S. Jerome gives this explanation: 'He who to chastise these little ones, dashes them against the rocks, makes them learn prudence. This is done by him who conforms his thoughts, even by force, to Christ and right reason, which are identical.'

The hard rock may also stand for the blame a man should lay upon himself when he finds his thoughts are wandering on extraneous cares, or he has grown reckless and allowed his heart to dwell on useless matters. This ought not to be allowed to go unpunished, as Richard says: 'Sometimes, while we are at prayer, pictures from the imagination persist in coming before our heart. Are we to be negligent and not to reprove them? No. It is better to reprove them severely and by the threat of chastisement stop the provocation to sin, punishing these thoughts by other

[1] Job xxi, 11. [2] Ps. cxxxvi, 9.

thoughts. I do not say that we should chastise our heart when it goes astray after wicked thoughts, for this has been said already ; but I say that we should inflict a penalty even when it thinks of what is useless, for Holy Scripture says that " The Holy Spirit . . . will withdraw himself from thoughts that are without understanding,"[1] being changeful, disorderly, and useless.'

You must pay great attention to this, for Richard makes this distinction between a good and a perfect man : the former corrects all his wrong thoughts and the latter all that are useless.

CHAPTER III

THAT CHANGE OF PLACE SHOULD RARELY BE MADE

THE second going forth which makes many people restless and disturbs their peace is change of place. They mean well by the change or make it because they think it is not the same sun that shines here as there, or we are not all guided by the one North Pole. They are deceived by some slight difference or think it is well to be decantered from one bottle to another like wine, and to try both places. They believe they will find elsewhere what is lacking here and will have more spiritual peace and joy if freed from certain annoyances which they suppose they will not find where they are going. But it generally happens (as they can bear witness) that they find things the reverse of what they expected. They are obliged to imitate the large fish bred in fresh water who for the sake of novelty go down to the sea, and when they taste its saltness, repent of having left their home and swim back against the stream, for they set out to seek peace and found great want of it ; they looked for quiet and saw it was a sham ; they sought for angels and found men.[2] God allows them to meet

[1] Wisdom i, 5.

[2] On the question of religious changing from one house to another, S. Teresa wrote, in a letter to Father Gracian dated October, 1575 : ' Now, my Father, let your Paternity attend to what I am about to say, and believe me, I understand women's whims better than you do. You must in no way allow it to be thought possible for any nun, whether prioress or sister, ever to leave her convent except to make a foundation. In fact, I have seen so much harm result from such a hope that I have often wished there might be an end to making foundations, so that all might settle down. Trust my word, and if I die, do not forget it, for the devil seeks no more than to make enclosed nuns see that such a thing is feasible. I could say much about the question, for though our Father General gave me the leave I asked for to move a religious from one house to another if the climate disagreed with her, yet I have seen so much

with a like fate to that of Noemi, who, to avoid the evil of famine in Bethlehem, went to the land of Moab where she met with a worse evil—that of death, which carried off her husband and two sons. Afterwards in great sorrow and anguish, she returned to her country, where she wept the departure which had been of so little use.[1]

It would be a minor ill if those who have acted thus did not make further sallies as futile as the first, so that the words spoken by Jeremias to Jerusalem may be addressed to them : ' Jerusalem hath grievously sinned, therefore she is become unstable.'[2] Continual change from one place and country to another can hardly escape being sinful ; hence one of the vices most severely blamed by Holy Scripture and disapproved of by men is changeability or fickleness. People with this character are called lunatics, for they change like the moon and resemble reeds shaken by the wind of every idle fancy, which they follow as boys follow butterflies.

They are levity itself—fickle as a weathercock ; the wise man says to them : ' Winnow not with every wind, and go not into every way.'[3] Their curse is that of Cain : ' A fugitive and wanderer shalt thou be upon the earth.'[4] It is also said that his countenance fell and his head moved restlessly. Mutable characters wish to wander like gypsies, and not only their heads but their feet are eager to travel, as though they had to bring tidings of the whole world.

Even when they grow old, such persons are not settled ; wholly wanting in firmness, they are more changeable than the wind or ships without an anchor, or are like trees transplanted in a garden and not yet rooted, and they seek for a time when their soul shall find repose. This it will obtain when they seek rest of body as far as possible. Of such the prophet Jeremias declares ' They have loved to move their feet, and have not rested, and have not pleased the Lord.'[5] He blames first their moving their feet, and then the result, which is want of the quietude of mind which is the forerunner of the Holy Ghost who is not pleased with those who lack it : this is the final calamity suffered by the unstable.

Since love of change is so harmful, do not let it pass unpunished in your heart ; and, setting aside obedience, be specially on your

harm result that, but for the good of the Order, I think it should not be permitted, as the death of a few would be better than the injury done to all ' (*Letters of S. Teresa*, vol. i).

[1] Ruth i. [2] Thren. i, 8. [3] Ecclus. v. 11.
[4] Gen. iv, 12. [5] Jer. xiv, 10.

guard against changing from one place to another, for I have never seen much good come of it, but often very great loss.

I said 'setting aside obedience,' for when ordained by that, it is rather a sacrifice than instability. I knew a religious who went from one place to another under obedience against his will, for though his body disliked it, his reason submitted. On the way, when he was far ahead of his companion, he fell into a stream from which he could not get out, and was drowned. Later on, it was revealed to a holy man who was praying fervently for his soul, that the death of the religious was reckoned for him as a martyrdom.

I charge you, so far as possible, to avoid all changes from one province or house to another, for they are a great impediment to recollection, which is not concerned with the locality but with the heart. Remember what our Lord says: 'Whatsoever house ye shall enter into, abide there, and depart not from thence'[1]; and 'in the same house remain.'[2] S. Paul bids us be 'steadfast and immovable,'[3] and praises himself for not showing levity. Again, he warns us to 'be no more children, tossed to and fro,'[4] and begs the Thessalonians to 'endeavour to be quiet.'[5]

Although, as a rule, it is quite right for a man not to change places but to remain in his place, sometimes there are reasons why he should leave it for the sake of abandoning some vice, which ought to be the first aim of a just man. Yet I think that nothing requires such mature deliberation as moving one's abode. As a figure of this we read that the Children of Israel took up their tents at God's command and moved elsewhere, and did not pitch them again until he bade them.

If you are ever in doubt as to whether you will go to another locality, I think you ought to listen to the advice of the sage, who says: 'Trust in God and stay in thy place. For it is easy in the eyes of God on a sudden to make a poor man rich. And the blessing of God maketh haste to reward the just, and in a swift hour his blessing beareth fruit.'[6]

As a rule, devout persons change from one place to another because they think they will profit by it; the wise man tells them to trust that they will advance where they are and that they should remain there. If they are calm and peaceful, it is easy for God to give them the interior quiescence of grace and the exterior society they desire, if for his honour they substitute for change of abode entrance into themselves so to be as hidden as possible.

[1] Luke ix, 4. [2] *Ibid.* 7. [3] 1 Cor. xv, 58.
[4] Eph. iv, 14. [5] 1 Thess. iv, 11. [6] Ecclus. xi, 22–24.

By telling us of God's haste in rewarding the just, the wise man wishes us to understand something which often happens in this way of recollection. This is that many receive great favours from God in a very short time, at which others are surprised and sometimes scandalized, for they do not believe that such sublime graces could be bestowed so soon. To this the wise man replies : ' The blessing of God maketh haste to reward the just and in a swift hour his blessing beareth fruit.'

As a conclusion regarding changes, adopt the words that holy Job says of himself : ' I shall die in my nest, and as a palm tree shall multiply my days.'[1] Though your present home may seem to you of minor perfection, remember that a rule of minor perfection well observed is better than a stricter life kept with laxity. Be content to multiply your days there : that is, your good works, which shine the brighter for being in an obscure light ; they are even more profitable, as they enlighten those who most need it. You must be like a palm tree, growing better daily and never losing the verdure of justice.

I have warned people not to wander from place to place, for among a hundred who do so, hardly three will be found who have been actuated by duty or desire for progress, but by some inferior motives. Besides this, those who change of their own accord, especially if they are striving to become recollected and live in peace (for which many things are required of which others know nothing), meet with difficulties and do not realize what they have lost until too late.

If, brother, you wish to practise recollection successfully, do not go forth from yourself, your province, your house, your cell, nor your lips by speaking without evident good results to come. If you do go out, you should be as anxious to return as the fish that gets free from the hook and leaps back to the water.

CHAPTER IV

THE GREAT ADVANTAGES OF KEEPING TO ONE'S CELL[2]

For the love of Christ do not dislike remaining in your room, since he, for love of you, remained on the cross until he died. If your cell seems to you austere and unpleasant, remember that many people who are perhaps less sinful in their hearts than you

[1] Job xxix, 18.

[2] S. Teresa, speaking of the ascetic discipline of the religious life, says : ' We nuns have done the greater part of our task ; we have given

are in a gloomy dungeon, or in Purgatory, or even in hell, though perhaps not so guilty as you are, and they will never rise from its depths. Your cell will save you from this if you live in it, and look upon it as love's prison to which you have condemned yourself for the sake of our Lord, though others consider it a sepulchre.

Believe me, brother, custom will make it so dear to you that you will find it very hard to leave it. But you will have to spend a long time there before you reach this state, to accustom yourself to being in it like God's bird in a cage, so that in time you will return to it like birds who willingly fly home to their cages because they are used to them.

A recollected man should be like the ark of God which never went forth from the inner, secret division of the temple to which all were not admitted. When the ark was carried through the desert it was enwrapped in three covers, besides the gold with which it was overlaid, in order that it might be more enclosed and protected. This is to teach you not to be contented with interior without exterior recollection ; the latter being necessary in order that a secret and retired place may provoke and invite you to enter into yourself, according to the words of the wise man : ' When I go into my house, I shall repose myself with her : for her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness.'[1]

If you enter your cell willingly, hastening to it in your eagerness to see it, and counting an hour you spend away from it as a day, and a day as a year ; then you will delight in it with both body and soul, for its conversation has no bitterness unless you bring it from elsewhere, and its company will never annoy or pain or disagree with you, but will give rest to your body and joy to your soul by the heavenly visitation which is made more often to those who are retired than to others.

up our liberty for the love of God and placed it in the power of another. We endure so much in our labours, fasts, silence, enclosure, attendance at choir, that however strongly we may wish for our ease, we rarely enjoy it ' (*Camino*, xii, 4). Of solitude she writes : ' To accustom ourselves to solitude is a great help to prayer ' (*Ibid.* iv, 6). ' Often do I think, O my Lord, that if aught can soothe a life apart from thee, it is solitude, wherein the soul rests with him who is its true repose ' (*Exclam.* ii). ' Remain in your cell : do not leave it without good cause, and then beg God for grace not to offend him ' (*Maxim* 19). She ordered that hermitages should be built into which the nuns could retire for solitary prayer and that the sisters should perform their manual labour in their own cells. The Carmelite Rule requires its subjects to remain in their cell day and night, meditating on the word of the Lord.

[1] Wisdom viii, 16.

Judicious superiors give work to those they see outside their cells to make them return. But superiors are not angry or severe with religious who live retired, but are kind to them and encourage their recollection.

If you seek peace and rest, nowhere will you have them better than in your cell; the dove that found no place to set its foot until it returned to the ark[1] is a figure of this. You will discover no place to rest the foot of your desire except in your cell; it will be loss of time to seek elsewhere, for in the end you will find it only there, and never will you grieve for having stayed in it or rejoice at having left it except from unavoidable necessity.

Among priests, he is held as the best who remains longest in church; the religious who keeps most strictly to his cell is considered the holiest; and the secular who stays at home is esteemed as the most sensible. Seclusion is specially required for this exercise which withdraws men into greater secrecy, and not content with putting a man in his cell, advises him to close the doors and window shutters for the sake of stricter privacy.

O brother, if you only began to taste the sweetness of seclusion in your cell or realized what you forfeit in losing it, and that it is like a safe ship which will bear you to the port of eternal life! It is Noah's ark, which will raise you high from the earth and bring you into communication with the angels of heaven, uplifting you to the mountains of high perfection. You are there as in a war tent, well provided with weapons—the spiritual exercises with which you must fight against the devils.

The advantages of a secluded place; a cell, a bedroom, a hermitage, or other secret spot to which the just withdraw to pray are such that I think I may apply to the cell the words of the wise man: 'a powerful protector, and strong stay, a defence from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon, a preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling; he (it) raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing.'[2] In these few words the sage has touched upon the many benefits the cell sometimes confers on one who is approaching God.

Firstly, the cell is a protector of the spiritual power the just man possesses of approaching God; this is defended if he withdraws to his cell that is prefigured in the fortress of David, where Daniel's strength was aided.

Secondly, the cell aids those who retire there, preserving their perfection and fortifying them in their resistance against evil, so that the wise man calls it 'a strong stay' of virtue.

[1] Gen. viii. [2] Ecclus. xxxiv, 19, 20.

Hence spiritual men keep more firmly to their good resolutions while they remain there, so that recollected men in their cells may aptly be compared to the eagles in their lofty nests, whence they are said to watch their young flying towards the sun to see whether they gaze on it without blinking; if not, the parents drive them from their company. The just behave much in the same way. From their nests, that is, their cells, they examine all their resolutions and desires which are, as it were, their young. If they see that these are entirely directed to the Sun of the glorious world, that is, to God, they train them to perfection. But should these desires close their eyes to him, not being what they ought to be, recollected men drive them away and cleave to those that are good.

Thirdly, the cell aids the just by modifying temptation so as to make it endurable and less trying; therefore the wise man says it is 'a defence from the heat.' This it does by sheltering the soul from occasions that incite it by kindling the harmful desires that cause sin.

The cell also aids the just by giving them spiritual pleasure and consolation, and is therefore called a 'covering' or tent spread with the branches of trees at noon. The text says 'at noon,' that being the time when those who have been working are in most need of rest and refreshment. The sage also gives us to understand that those who do not persevere in keeping their cell at least until noon, which means for half the time, do not taste of its benefits.

Then, brother, if you wish to be consoled and to taste of divine things, you must remain in your cell, for that is the place to which God invites his own and gives them to enjoy in secret what is often forfeited in public. Therefore, it is well for you to stay there, awaiting, like another Daniel, the food he will send you.

The cell helps the just by giving them ample opportunity to weep for their sins in private, for which it is far the most suitable place, for according to the wise man, it is also a supplication or petition for sins.[1] There, in its hidden precincts, you should pour forth your soul like another S. Peter. No doubt the place in which we bewail our misdeeds avails us in God's sight, for our tears and sighs cry thence to God better than did Abel's blood from the earth.

Again, our cell protects us from the many falls we should meet with, preserving us from stumbling frequently, like those who go out as did Dinah to see what causes them to fall merely through their being seen by others. This was David's case. Through

[1] This is not according to the Douai version. The Vulgate gives *Deprecatio offensionis*.

leaving his room to pass through the corridors, he fell into a snare laid for him by the devil which he would otherwise have avoided.

The cell raises the just, if they remain in it, to great perfection in the virtues, as the sage declares, making them like Noah's ark on the mountains of Armenia.

It enlightens the eyes of the soul, which beholds divine things more clearly when the bodily eyes are withdrawn from looking at vanities in our cell, whence, like another Tobias, they will see what is more sublime if they stay in the secluded cell to think of God.

The cell cures the soul of its sick longing for God, being the infirmary to which those withdraw whom he has wounded with his love. This ill can only be cured by him who caused it and somewhat resembles the seat of its pain : God caused it in the secret depths of the heart, and comes to cure it in the secrecy of the cell.

The wise man declares that the cell gives life, for there Christ restores it to the maiden, that is, our soul, to live a new life with his Spirit and the changed heart he has created.

Finally it gives a benediction, for religious who remain in their cells are blessed of the Lord, like Jacob, who, because he was a recollected man who rarely left his home, received the blessing that Esau lost through going out hunting. Evidently, religious should keep to their cells, leaving them as little as possible, and should examine why they go forth, inflicting some punishment on themselves unless it was profitable, as our Letter directs.

In confirmation of this, S. Bernard says : ' It is impossible for a man to fix his mind on any subject unless his body remains in one place. To fly from the disorder of his soul by travelling about is like flying from his own shadow ; he flees from himself and walks in a circle, changes his locality but not his soul, and finds himself everywhere. Perhaps the change may make him worse, for a sick man is injured and tortured by being moved about.'

Gerson says that a religious should by no means leave his monastery for some other place by his own will except because of an evident and most dangerous occasion of committing mortal sin, from which he ought to fly, unless it is an imaginary danger and he fears where there is no cause for fear.

The devil lays such snares to distract recollected men that he seeks a thousand opportunities of engaging their thoughts and causing them some disturbing anxiety connected with what would rather harm than help them. The mind recalls what happened in such and such an affair and what will come to pass in this, that, or the other.

As regards the devil's malice in trying to make you go out of yourself, you must be careful to drive away so far as possible whatever may engage your mind, be it good, bad, or indifferent. Do not wonder at my including what is good, for often the demon causes good thoughts to the recollected to disturb them and lead them on to evil. You should finish your work as soon as possible, simply that you may have nothing to think about, so that, on asking yourself whether there is anything you must do or think over, you can answer 'no,' but are ready to keep 'the feast of the Lord and the festivals of the feasts,' which are nothing but your rest and joy in God and his in you. In this feast all works of penance cease, as is shown by Judith, who fasted all the days of her life except the sabbath,[1] for according to the prophet, this sabbath is to be called delightful, being the joy of recollection in which we are to do nothing but rejoice in the Lord, enclosing and burying ourselves within our hearts while awaiting better things.[2]

This is included in the commandment to keep the feast of the Lord spiritually: 'Let each man stay at home, and let none go forth out of his place the seventh day.'[3] We cannot rejoice by ourselves without the cessation of all exterior cares that draw us out of our place, which is recollection; and the more they cease, the greater will be our joy.

The second means you must take will aid the former. It is that, since we cannot throw off all earthly cares, at least when they come to our mind we should get rid of them quickly, as though to say: 'At the best, such and such a thing may follow from this affair, and at the worst so and so may result. May God direct it as he wills: I mean to bear either with equal submission. It will be enough to suffer if the thing should happen without tormenting myself about it beforehand.'

To fix times and places for our duties and cares helps us greatly against going out of ourselves continually, and leaves us certain hours or days in which to keep our mind free to taste and see how sweet the Lord is.

CHAPTER V

OF OTHER HARMFUL WANDERINGS

THERE is another far more unprofitable going forth that the devil suggests under some virtuous pretext, for he never deceives the

[1] Judith viii, 6. [2] Isa. lviii, 13.

[3] Exod. xvi, 29. The Spanish gives: 'Let each man rejoice by himself.'

good except under the pretence of some apparent profit by which, little by little, he draws them, if he can, into some misconduct, as a fisherman hides the hook under a deceptive bait, hoping it will hold fast. If it is swallowed by a large fish, he does not drag the line hard at first to haul it out, but draws it near the bank from which he can easily land it. The demon acts in the same way with some religious: covering the hook of his fraud with some plausible false reason, he suggests that they should leave their Order. Though to men this reason appears good, in reality it is quite the reverse. When the devil sees you beginning to bite, tepid, wishing for dispensations and wanting to change to another Order, he waits to catch you until you swallow the bait by resolving to leave your community. He does not draw you out at once, but by some subterfuges enables you to obtain a Brief that cuts short your life of perfection. When it arrives he drags you from the water to the shore, where you will soon die, devoid of all devotion. After you have left your community, the devil will show you the great evils concealed under this Brief, so that you may openly prefer what is less perfect and knowingly deceive yourself, being without excuse.

Lest you should think me rash in saying there are no slight evils under the Brief for which you seek, listen to S. Bernard's words to a relative who had passed to a less austere Order: 'O senseless youth! Who has misled you into not paying the vows your lips pronounced? Do you not know that by your words you will be condemned or justified? Why do they cajole you with the Apostolical dispensation while your conscience is bound by the divine sentence? God's sentence is: "No man putting his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."[1] Did they persuade you to believe, when they said: "Enjoy yourself; enjoy yourself," that you would not be looking back? My beloved son, if sinners flatter you to deceive you, do not consent to them nor trust to every spirit; have many friends but let one in a thousand be your counsellor. Avoid dangerous occasions, reject flattery, shut your eyes to adulation; question your own soul, for you know yourself better than others do. Look into your heart; examine your intention; take counsel of the truth; answer your conscience. Why did you go away? Why did you leave your Order, and your brethren and your monastery and me, who was bound to you by close ties of the flesh and still more of the spirit?

'If you have made this change in order to live better and more

[1] Luke ix, 62.

perfectly, you are safe, for you have not looked back ; rejoice with the Apostle, saying : " I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend,"[1] and receive the palm of eternal glory. But if you have acted from any other motive, do not be high-minded but fear, and forgive me for saying that all the superfluous food or clothing or idle words or curious and rash speculations, in fact, all that you allow yourself outside that which you vowed and kept to within our Order, is without doubt a looking back, a sin, and an apostasy.'

In fact, S. Bernard has spoken well on the danger a religious incurs by leaving his Order, though he may have obtained a dispensation, for the dispensation is nearly always invalid on account of the false accounts given to obtain it. Do not think you can amend such a harmful going-forth afterwards, but foresee the harm you would incur by it. This is symbolized by the way in which Solomon punished a false oath. ' The king also sent and called for Semei, and said to him : Build thee a house in Jerusalem and dwell there ; and go not out from thence any whither. For on what day soever thou shalt go out, and shalt pass over the brook Cedron, know that thou shalt be put to death.'[2] Semei said it was good and he would do it, yet, overcome by some slight temptation, he broke his oath and suffered deservedly.

The true King, Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, ' called Semei ' : he sent his holy inspiration and angel when he moved a man's heart to dwell in the peaceful Jerusalem, the religious state, by taking a vow to remain in it. He who, like Semei, hears, coins a law for himself of what was formerly a counsel in the eyes of God ; as in the case of Solomon who reprimanded Semei severely for having broken the oath of God, that is, his vow. And though the vow is more than an oath, yet it would have been a great sin merely to have offended against the oath of the Lord and the king's command.

As the essential vows are three, it is said that Semei left Jerusalem after three years and was punished for having despised the ' oath of the Lord ' and overrated his servants, who, as he had not trained them rightly to stay at home, had gone away. He had at once saddled his ass to seek them and it bore him to his death.

If you keep your servants (your desires) in disorder, and they go from you to what is unlawful, do not saddle your ass, which is your body, to follow them, lest you should go from bad to worse and all should be lost. Let not those of your household have dominion over you, then shall you be without spot.

[1] Phil. iii, 12. [2] 3 Kings ii, 36–7.

If your wrong desires wander forth, let not your feet be swift to follow them unless from being Semei (which means an obedient man) you wish to become a murdered man, and that all your past misdeeds should come upon you, making you the more to blame, as they came on Semei, whom Solomon reproached for the wrongs committed on his father David.

From these and other outgoings which are faulty or savour of evil you must guard yourself, for recollection of heart implies a life of retirement. If you contemn this, you yourself will be condemned.

CHAPTER VI

OUTGOINGS WHICH ARE RIGHT

SETTING aside such goings forth, there are others which are good. Some people go forth, like S. Peter, to weep bitterly and confess their sins.[1] Others leave the world to pray, imitating Moses, who left Pharaoh's house for that purpose and at once obtained his petition.[2] If you wish to become more perfect and to be heard more quickly by the Lord, leave the royal courts to pray, for they are not houses of prayer but of worldly men for whom you should intercede like the holy prophet, though you quit their company.

Others, like Josue, go forth to fight against Amalech, that is, the devil, against whom we must war by departing from sin and its occasions. This is symbolized by Josue's going out of Egypt into the desert, where he won a more glorious victory.

Some men, like Isaac, go out into the fields to think of divine things and meditate. Gazing on the heavens full of stars, the waters with their fishes, and the air with its birds, they contemplate their Creator in many ways.[3]

[1] Matt. xxvi. [2] Exod. vi.

[3] S. Teresa learnt from Fray Osuna to 'rise from nature up to nature's God.' She never tires of bringing it into her teachings. In the *Life* we find: 'The sight of the country, water, flowers, was a help to me. They drew me to fervour and recollection, and acted as my guide, reminding me of my ingratitude and sin. In them I saw traces of my Creator, and they were as a book to me' (*Life*, ch. x). 'God, who is so great and wise, has doubtless hidden secrets in all things he created that we should greatly benefit by knowing, as those say who understand such matters. Indeed, I believe that in each smallest creature he has made, though it be but a tiny ant, there are more wonders than can be understood' (*Castle*, M. iv, ch. ii, 3). In another place the Saint commends those who cannot pray recollectedly to go out and contemplate the heavens.

Others flee from persecutions, troubles, and quarrels, as David fled from the city from his son Absalom, who persecuted him cruelly. These men seek to imitate Christ who, out of condescension to our weakness, left Jerusalem and the pharisees there who sought his blood and slandered his good name.

Other people leave sublime contemplation in order to think about their death, like Elias, who on the mount of God stood at the entrance of the cave (an image of the grave), whence he contemplated the judgement God would pass in his presence and the many things that would happen beforehand.[1]

Apart from these goings forth, which I have rather touched upon than explained, there are other matters rather spiritual than corporal that cause those who lead a life of recollection to break forth into cries or exterior gestures. The cries are a sort of shrill exclamation, loud and piercing. No words are pronounced, for it is not voluntary nor uttered deliberately, but is a kind of sudden impulse that bursts forth from the heart and is impossible to prevent or stop half-way.

These exclamations are of two kinds. Sometimes they arise from a fervent meditation with which devout persons are accustomed to arouse their souls : being greatly stimulated and moved, they sometimes send forth these impulsive cries as though pouring forth all their longings.

There is another kind of cry or exclamation or sigh caused by a fire ignited in the heart by no power of our own. Sometimes this so increases that, unless it broke forth in sobs or cries, the chest would burst. At times, even without this cause, when the soul has been absorbed in some business matter, on returning to itself, it gives a very loud, sudden exclamation that seems to raise it to heaven. As a rule, after these exclamations the soul feels a certain discontent which may result either from bashfulness at having been overheard, or from feeling that it has less grace than before, or from realizing how weak it is, since it cannot control itself in such little matters.

Besides recognizing that these exclamations are not deliberate, since he did not think of them before he uttered them, the recollected man sees that they are not premeditated, for though he often tries to repeat them, he is unable to do so until they break forth from his heart sincerely and spontaneously.

Since these exclamations are so beyond the control of the exterior man and do not take the form of words, doubtless the

[1] 3 Kings, xix.

spirit works according to its spiritual impulses, chiefly in the highest part of the soul, though the body takes some part in it. Speaking of this, I knew a recollected man who was awakened from peaceful sleep by hearing his own soul sing in a delicate treble which rose from his breast and seemed to mount to heaven. The voice seemed to him the finest he had ever heard or hoped to hear while he dwelt in the flesh. He did not perceive it with the ears of his body nor sing it with his lips. It so delighted him that he was overjoyed whenever he thought of it.

Other exterior outgoings are gestures which are seen by others and groans which the inexperienced think are blameworthy, and even those who emit them would sometimes like to stop them but are unable, for they cannot control them.[1] Sometimes the head is wrenched upwards with a force that no human power can prevent, yet if the owner tries to restore it to the same position afterwards, he cannot do so, nor does he know how.

Although these sallyings forth may be good on account of their origin, it is sound advice that a man should study and strive so far as he can to hide these manifestations. Although, later on, when the Spirit of him who holds the power has taken control of us, we cannot prevent such demonstrations, as I said, yet we can at first if we attend to it and are careful to suppress them. Therefore avoid sighing or sobbing or making gestures during prayer when you are greatly inflamed by love for God. You must know that you will feel within your soul spiritual movements which you will think are bodily and visible to others, yet from your habit of controlling your exterior you will find that you have not outwardly conformed to your inward feelings and that the latter are more perfect when farthest removed from outward manifestation.

Among those who cannot prevent these exterior manifestations,

[1] Throughout her books and letters S. Teresa speaks of her extreme repugnance to give any outward sign of spiritual favours. She used to attribute any such manifestation to a weak heart or other causes of the kind. She tells of her joy at being delivered from them in the seventh Mansions: 'When the soul arrives at this state, it does not go into ecstasies except perhaps on rare occasions—even then they are not like the former trances and the flight of the spirit, and seldom take place in public as they did before.' (A marginal note in her handwriting adds: 'That is, so as to lose the senses.') . . . 'In short, sisters, I cannot tell the reason, but as soon as God shows the soul what this mansion contains, bringing it to dwell within the precincts, the infirmity so troublesome to the mind and impossible to get over, disappears at once' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iii, 10, 11).

I knew a man very given to recollection who, when his face was so raised to heaven, lest others should guess the reason, used to begin talking about the beams of the house and the ceiling as though he were looking at them purposely.

If the exterior sounds or gestures, whatever they may be, arise from some emotion of the heart, the only way to avoid them is by dissimulating with one's feelings as though one did not notice or care for them, but wished to think of other subjects. Then the emotions will weaken, for they increase the more they are indulged.

As a general rule, you can restrain the manifestations of the spirit by this means so as not to be the slave of your feelings and to lose in one way more than you gain in another, and even, very often, to bring yourself to shame.

Other remedies might be prescribed according to the character of the person and various circumstances ; but as I am speaking to the general public, it would be impossible to advise each man personally without seeing him. But note this : if in order to prevent any outward sign the inward emotion must cease, it would not only be an error to repress the latter but I believe it would be a sin of resistance against the Holy Ghost. Therefore you must take greater care to preserve your inward devotion than to avoid showing it outwardly, and if you do not know how or cannot separate the two, and the fervent desires within you are accompanied by loud cries outwardly, never mind ; do not distress yourself, for if any are scandalized it will be the wicked, not the good ; and the scandal is not given, but taken, as in the case of the pharisees.

Speaking of this, I knew a religious who often felt a growing devotion and feelings which strongly urged him to draw near to God. As this grace increased, he could not endure it without giving deep sighs. As he was ashamed of being heard by everyone and of not being able to hide his emotion, he went to a holy man and asked him : ' If someone should have feelings in his breast which led him to cry out or sigh, would it be well to avoid these feelings when they begin, distracting his heart lest he should give outward signs of them ? ' The other answered : ' God denies himself in secret to those who deny him in public, and lest we should lose his hidden communication we must not crush that which he seeks to work in us publicly, so that he may be glorified in all things.' This was said by one who gave many of the outward signs described, which he could not avoid. I was assured that he was found in ecstasy in his bed, and they began to put

his shroud on, thinking that he was dead. Afterwards he returned to himself, and finding that his legs were bound, he declared that if they had been cut off, he would not have felt it. There are two sides to all such things, and a great deal of hypocrisy is mixed up with the matter.

CHAPTER VII

SHOWS WHICH IS THE BEST: TO ENTER INTO ONESELF OR ABOVE ONESELF

THOSE who practise recollection and have made some little way in it often wonder whether it is better for a man to enter into himself or to rise above himself. Firstly we remark that both these things are proper to recollection and cannot be done without it. To enter within oneself is the beginning of rising above oneself, for our Lord's words apply here: 'He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.'

These two courses: to enter within oneself or rise above oneself, or to draw the soul into oneself or raise it above, are the two chief practices in this exercise: they should be one's principal aim, and they satisfy man's heart above all things. It costs less effort to enter into oneself than to rise above oneself, therefore I think that when the soul is equally prepared and fit for either, it should enter itself, for it will rise without any effort of its own, as a result of the former action, and its ascension will then be more pure and spiritual. However, you should follow whichever course your soul prefers, as you would have more grace and help for it.[1]

Sometimes the soul is content with neither entering nor rising above itself, but with a medium course, like a person who stands

[1] S. Teresa says: 'There is another kind of prayer which usually precedes divine consolations. This is a kind of recollection which I believe is supernatural. There is no occasion to retire nor to shut the eyes, nor does it depend on anything exterior; involuntarily the eyes close and solitude is found. Without any labour of one's own the temple of which I spoke is reared for the soul in which to pray: the senses and exterior surroundings appear to lose their hold, while the spirit gradually regains its lost sovereignty. Some say the soul enters into itself; others that it rises above itself. I can say nothing about these terms' (*Castle*, M. iv, ch. iii, 1). S. Teresa puts this stage of prayer before the prayer of quiet.

in a doorway and does not wish to enter or go out. This state is good if the imagination is held captive and the recollection brings some satisfaction ; otherwise it deceives us into accepting a lower grade of prayer.

Your chief aim should be to raise your spirit or to recollect it within yourself, not allowing any part of it to wander but letting it be wholly either within or above you, always entire in itself, according to S. Paul's words : ' Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing, in all things give thanks : for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you all. Extinguish not the spirit. Despise not prophecies. But prove all things : hold fast that which is good. From all appearance of evil refrain yourselves. And may the God of peace himself sanctify you in all things : that your whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is faithful, who hath called you, who also will do it.'[1]

In these words the blessed S. Paul includes almost all that we have discussed.

First he tells us always to rejoice in the Lord, which in this case means that we should be perfectly satisfied with the state we have chosen ; this causes us to avoid wandering forth, because for want of this satisfaction many leave the place in which they should remain.

S. Paul also bids us ' pray without ceasing,' which is proper to recollection, for, when it is perfect, it admits no intervention of any creature that would act as an interruption and detain the soul from reaching God as promptly as it desires.

We are also to give thanks in all things, attributing them entirely to God. If we do this, we shall be using ' the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left ' :[2] we shall be quiet and at peace, and not go forth by words of anger or by other ways that divert us from ourselves, for this is the will of God in Christ, who gave permission for all that has been done for the instruction of all men.

The Apostle then charges us not to ' extinguish the spirit ' in order to conceal it. It is well that you should hide it, as I said, but wrong to extinguish it : if you must extinguish it in order to keep it secret, let it be manifest and give it space to breathe, lest it should perish within you, for you would perish without it.

The prophecies that the Apostle warns us against despising are the many secrets which God reveals to the devout soul during

[1] 1 Thess. v, 16–24. [2] 2 Cor. vi, 7.

recollection. We must prove them by bringing them into touch with the reason to see whether they come from our own spirit, which often prophesies what we wish, or whether they are from the divine Spirit which never errs. If we perceive something that seems wrong, we ought to set it aside until we know whether it is good.

S. Paul adds that we must ' prove all things,' which, applied to the spiritual outgoings and entrances of the soul, signifies that, as regards your spirit, that is good which it feels is best and to which it is most inclined. To this it should keep, preserving itself in unity so that God, the Lover of peace, may sanctify your heart, giving you his grace to enter into yourself or rise above yourself in your whole spirit in the manner described. This cannot be done in entirety if the soul pours itself forth by any of the senses, nor can the soul be undivided when quietude and seclusion of the body are lacking. Therefore the Apostle says that the spirit, which is the higher part, and the soul, which is the lower,[1] together with the body, must be preserved wholly, without any contentious murmuring or discontent in order to prepare for the coming of our Lord to the heart with which he desires to find himself at one. This was the case with the Virgin : her body was recollected and enclosed, since it is said that the angel ' came in,' and her soul was wholly at one for she believed the substantial word of God which did not enter through her senses, and her spirit consented to the Holy Ghost who worked in her, overshadowing her and received by her in unity of spirit. She went forth out of herself as into a path prepared for her by God, who by his virginal Spirit infused himself into her womb to perform in reality that which he performs spiritually day by day in the holy souls that he transforms.

[1] S. Teresa speaks of the difference between the spirit and the soul when describing the manifestation within her of the presence of the Blessed Trinity. She writes : ' Whatever were her trials or labours, the centre of her soul seemed never moved from its resting-place. Thus in a manner her soul seemed divided. . . . Though the soul is known to be undivided, it is fact and no fancy, and often happens. Interior effects show for certain that there is a positive difference between the soul and the spirit, although they are one with each other. There is an extremely subtle distinction between them, so that sometimes they seem to act in a different way from one another, as does the knowledge given them by God. It also appears to me that the soul and its faculties are not identical ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. i, 14, 15). ' I cannot understand what the mind is or how it differs from the soul or spirit either : all three seem to me but one ' (*Life*, xviii, 4).

The rest of the Apostle's words are only intended to beget confidence in these things, great as they are ; for the same God who inspires the wish for them accomplishes them in the hearts that make themselves ready for him by leading interior lives and chastising themselves when they wander forth idly.

TENTH TREATISE

SPEAKS OF THE TEARS OF RECOLLECTION, SAYING: 'LET TEARS BE THY WEAPONS IN THY FIGHT FOR GRACE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

TEARS GIVE VALUE TO OUR PRAYERS AND WORKS

SINCE it is very necessary for man to communicate with God and to have some way of dealing and mode of contract with him, he must find some means of rendering this contract sure.

I say this because, according to holy Job: 'Man cannot be justified compared with God. If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one for a thousand.'[2] Job declares that if we wish for witnesses, none will dare testify to our goodness. If we seek to bring before him all our justice and good works, they will seem like filthy rags, white in parts and in others full of blood. 'If I would show myself innocent, he shall prove me wicked. If I be washed as it were with snow-waters, and my hands shall shine ever so clean, yet thou shalt plunge me in filth, and my garments shall abhor me.' He is so powerful that 'before him I shall seem like a leaf that is carried away with the wind,' and if I strive to contend with him by subterfuge and deceit he is so wise and sagacious that 'if he comes to me, I shall not see him: if he depart, I shall not understand.'

Holy Job spoke thus to show that neither on account of his justice, nor by craft, nor force, nor much speaking, nor by any other such means can a man treat with God and make sure of his own well-being.

Job declares that we cannot contend with words in order that rhetoricians and eloquent men may fear. He says that no one can justify himself in God's sight, in order to stop those who consider themselves saints from indulging in vainglory. Crafti-

[1] In the Spanish, L, the tenth Letter, is represented by *Lagrimas*, 'tears.'

[2] Job ix, 3.

ness is also worthless as regards the Lord, therefore let cunning people know that they ignore what most they need, which is to prevail with God, and the tears of self-important and proud persons avail less with him than any others in my experience, so that there is neither counsel nor strength nor wisdom nor craft that can oppose him. He is proof against all arms except those mentioned in this Letter, which, though they seem to specify none, yet include them all: 'Let tears be thy weapons when thou dost war for grace.'

Things that in themselves have no value in God's sight, when joined with tears avail much: the tears in themselves have greater weight than all the rest. S. Maximus says of their eloquence: 'Tears do not ask for pardon, but rather earn it. They give no reason for it, yet win mercy, for sometimes speech does not declare all that is to be said, but tears produce and pour forth and plead all that the heart feels.'[1]

S. Jerome declares that tears not only justify but sanctify. That the good deeds by which man justifies himself are greatly furthered by tears is evident from the words of S. Gregory: 'A good work not bedewed with the tears of prayer is dry, but it is goodly if when the virtuous action is performed it is expanded by tears.' That tears possess a marvellous art and hidden skill of penetrating to the heart of God is shown in the Canticles, where the Bridegroom complains that his 'locks are full with the drops of the nights.'[2] These are nothing but the tears shed by the bride for his Divinity: drawn and compelled by them, he comes to supplicate her who was then his suppliant.

It now remains to be seen why tears have a power which overcome the power of God. This we will prove by our Lord's word that will lead us to feel great love for them. He says: 'The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away':[3] and elsewhere that unless we receive the kingdom of God as a child, we shall not enter it.[4] Most certainly the second saying does not contradict the first, but shows that the kind of violence which the kingdom of heaven suffers is of a sort of which children are capable, that is, they obtain by force of tears what they could not get by other means.

[1] 'With these scanty tears that I am now weeping, but yet thy gift —water from a well so impure, so far as it is mine—I seem to make thee some recompense for treachery so great as mine' (*Life*, xix, 10). S. Teresa says that she uses the word 'tears' to signify devotion very often, even when no tears are actually shed.

[2] Cant. v, 2. [3] S. Matt. xi, 12. [4] S. Luke xviii, 16.

We see this every day. When their parents will not give them what they ask for, they continue crying until they gain the victory. So tears do more than force : the little ones peacefully get what they want and their father and mother console them with caresses and endearing words, wipe the tears from their eyes, and embrace and hold them in their arms to pacify them. Concerning this, God says : ' Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her, all you that love her ; rejoice for joy with her, all you that mourn for her. That you may suck, and be filled with the breasts of her consolations ; that you may milk out, and flow with delights, from the abundance of her glory. . . . You shall be carried at the breasts, and upon the knees they shall caress you. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you, and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. You shall see and your heart shall rejoice, and your bones shall flourish like an herb, and the hand of the Lord shall be known to his servants.'[1]

The beautiful comparison made by God of the weeping child and its mother is addressed to those who weep for ' Jerusalem above, which is the mother of us all.' But the words are not spoken to or about the saints who dwell there, for they have no cause to weep nor can they do so. It is addressed to the just who long to go there and who feel in their heart a constant longing to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Such as these weep for Jerusalem, for their conversation is in heaven though they dwell on earth, and nothing saddens them more than to remember the Paradise of God as in the Psalm : ' Upon the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept : when we remembered Sion.'[2] The rivers of Babylon are all the penalties that remain of sin which flow down to hell, and the wicked follow them, for the penalties of this life do not suffice for such crimes, therefore they both end in hell. But the righteous sit beside these rivers, for they only have to suffer transient penalties which pass away, leaving them seated and not departing with this world, but awaiting the world of the eternal Father prepared for them.

David does not say they wept on account of their discomfort by the rivers, which signify trials, but because of their longing for Sion, that is for heaven, where the God of Gods is beheld. This means that the just are more tormented by the postponement of the glory promised them than by all the other sufferings of the world, for they feel their absence from Sion and weep for it in a very different manner from those treated of in the *Second Alphabet*. Our Lord soon grants them a remedy by his grace, giving them

[1] Isa. lxvi, 10–14. [2] Ps. cxxxvi, 1.

some foretaste of what they look for yonder.[1] And as it is won more easily by tears than by any other means, our Letter bids us ' let tears be our arms ' by which to win grace. We will discuss two matters in this Letter : tears in connection with recollection, and the grace received on their account.

CHAPTER II

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF THE TEARS OF RECOLLECTION

As regards the first point, it must be noticed that this exercise exceeds all others in the shedding of tears as it does in many other things. In no other are they so frequent, for those who practise recollection weep more easily, so that Isaias' words apply to the recollected : ' Then shall thy light rise up in darkness, and thy darkness shall be as the noon-day. And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and will fill thy bones with brightness, and deliver thy bones, and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail.'[2]

When a devout person closes the shutters of the senses, the understanding remains in darkness, for it is only by their means that light can reach it. But if he subjects himself to the yoke of the faith it tells him that the eyes of the body cannot see nor its ears hear, nor has it entered into the heart of man (that is, the mind) to conceive what good things God hath prepared for those

[1] Speaking of the soul after the spiritual marriage, S. Teresa wrote : ' The most surprising thing to me is that the sorrow and distress which such souls felt because they could not die and enjoy our Lord's presence are now exchanged for as fervent a desire of serving him, of causing him to be praised, and of helping others to the utmost of their power. Not only have they ceased to long for death, but they wish for a long life and most heavy crosses, if such would bring ever so little honour to our Lord. Thus, if they knew for certain that immediately on quitting their bodies their souls would enjoy God, it would make no difference to them, nor do they think of the glory enjoyed by the saints, and long to share it. Such souls hold that their glory consists in helping, in any way, him who was crucified, especially as they see how men offend against him, and how few, detached from all else, care for his honour alone. True, people in this state forget this at times, and are seized with tender longings to enjoy God and to leave this land of exile, especially as they see how little they serve him. Then, returning to themselves and reflecting how they possess him continually in their souls, they are satisfied, offering to his Majesty their willingness to live as the most costly oblation they can make. They fear death no more than they would a delicious trance ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iii, 5).

[2] Isa. lviii, 10, 11.

who love him. Then, if he duly recollects himself, he will receive that good and perfect gift which descends from the Father of lights. Then his former darkness, caused by suppressing his understanding, will become brilliant midday, in which the Bridegroom feeds his flock. For another and a higher way of knowledge is imparted to the mind, which is as it were a half-light between that of those who travel by the common way and those who have finally attained. Hence the recollected do not give up the use of the reason in order that they may not understand, but that they may understand in a higher manner and that the soul may be filled with divine light and illumination, whence they learn things so sublime and in so high a way that neither what they learn nor how they learn it can be told, nor can speech reveal what the soul feels and knows.

God always gives peace in recollection, though we often lose this peace and joy through our negligence. Yet there ever remains in the soul that has truly tasted recollection a very strong desire to return to it; for the soul then sees its 'bones,' which typify its powers, freed from their natural weakness, and it can do many things through him who strengthens it, for he denies it nothing, but gives it more than that for which it asks.

The rest of the prophet's words apply to tears, which he classes in three ascending grades. First, he says that the recollected man is 'like a watered garden,' and as that seems inadequate, he adds that he is 'like a fountain of water,' and lest we should think that tears would ever fail such a person, he says that he is 'like a fountain of water whose waters shall not fail' which flow from the founts of the eyes.

Those who practise recollection weep for many different motives. Fervent beginners weep in order to withdraw completely into the companionship of him who gives himself the more freely when they are most alone; they strive to obtain by tears that which they think their works do not deserve: they beg God to grant solely for his own sake that for which they prepare themselves.[1] It suffices that those who truly and with loving

[1] S. Teresa says that she had already the gift of tears when she first read the *Spiritual Alphabet*. Speaking of sensible devotion and the tears of beginners, she declares that when she began to weep over the Passion or her sins, she could not stop until she had a bad headache. Such tears and good desires are often caused partly by the natural disposition, but they end in God (*Castle*, M. i, ch. i, 6). With sensitive people of weak health these uncontrollable fits of weeping may come from 'an accumulation of humours round the heart, which has a great deal more to do with such tears than has the love of God. Such persons seem as though

hearts long to recollect themselves should say : ' Why dost thou not give thyself to thy poor creature ? Thou dost fill heaven and earth and leave naught empty but my heart. Since thou dost clothe the lilies and provide food for the birds and sustain the worms, why dost thou forget me who have forgotten all for thee ? '

In such words as these does the heart lament which desires with its whole soul to recollect itself in God and withdraw from all that keeps it apart from him. It seeks a secret place in which to mourn the absence of its beloved, who comes to it more quickly by sea than by land. If we send across the sea of tears the ship of our heart for him to travel by ; if we do not cease weeping, he will be with us at once, for as the water increases it raises the vessel of our heart so that, as it no longer touches earth, it can sail more safely, and he may come to us. Our eyes, refreshed and cleansed by the lotion of tears, can see him from afar coming to the port of recollection where we await him. S. Bernard says of this : ' Let him who has time to weep, weep abundantly ; let his tears be not wanting in devout affection or in consolation. Let him reflect that he can find in himself no joy, but only grief and loneliness ; that his body has nothing good in it nor is there in the wicked world aught but vanity and affliction of spirit. Let him consider that neither from within him nor beneath him nor around him can any comfort come, so that he may learn to seek for it above him and hope for it from heaven. Meanwhile, let him bewail his sorrow, his eyes being rivers of tears ; his eyelids knowing no repose, for eyes that were blinded are cleansed by tears and the sight becomes strong enough to gaze on the brightness of the most pure light.'

So says this Saint, for the recollected ought to strive solely for divine consolation, and should know that in order to behold it the eyes must first be washed with tears, which are like snow-water that descends from the heights. Tears are so powerful an aid to recollection as to take the place of an experienced master, so that many people, merely by weeping in their search for the treasure hidden in recollection, have found great riches, and solely by this means have discovered that the Holy Ghost has thus guided them by a shorter road than they thought. For when the soul

they would never stop crying : believing that tears are beneficial, they encourage them as much as possible. The devil seizes this opportunity of weakening them, so that they become unable to pray or keep the Rule. . . . Let us not fancy, that if we cry a great deal we have done all that is needed—rather we must work hard and practise the virtues : that is the essential—leaving tears to fall when God sends them ' (*Castle*, M. vi. ch. vi, 8, 9 ; *Life*, xxix, 12).

rests from weeping, it is to find itself with him it sought, and in its happiness it realizes that its tears ceased because the absence ceased that caused them. Then it learns by experience what our Lord declared: 'Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh.'[1]

Such persons resemble the heavens which before rain are stormy and dark, gloomy and impenetrable; but after they have poured forth their waters are clear and visible, joyful and serene, seeming to smile as they reveal their unclouded beauty. So it is with those who weep in order to cleanse their sight so that they may see God spiritually when their eyes have opened after the tears have descended from their clouds. All darkness and cloudiness have withdrawn from the heavens of their soul, leaving them with such interior clarity that their souls seem to them crystalline and transparent, penetrated with divine light and full of the joy of which Tobias spoke to God: 'After a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness.'[2]

Tranquillity and peace in recollected souls are caused by the Lord. He often produces them in persons who, seeing how little strength they have of their own, feel a tempest of weariness and grief at the impossibility of obtaining what they desire, and show it by their tears, in return for which he infuses joy into their soul. This joy is called infused because it comes from above, whence it was looked for by the soul, for it does not resemble earthly joy, which is not deep enough to enter the heart of the just, and is not sublime and in no way resembles celestial happiness. Nor has it continuity, since it is with us neither at our birth nor death. It allows us to enter and leave the world weeping, and only accompanies us during part of our lifetime in order to keep us from rectitude; for the midst of our days does not conform with the two extremes, since we are born and die weeping.

CHAPTER III

THOSE WHO WEEP FOR THE BRIDEGROOM

Of those who weep for the Bridegroom it is said in the Canticles: 'Her eyes are as doves upon brooks of waters, which are washed with milk, and sit beside the plentiful streams.'[3] A dove has naturally tearful eyes and never ceases sighing on account of the

[1] S. Luke vi. [2] Tob. iii, 22.

[3] Cant. v, 12. These words are here applied to the bride, but in the Vulgate and Douai versions they refer to the Bridegroom.

deep love it feels, for no bird is so affectionate. Since its love is wholly pure, uncontaminated with the things of earth, the love of the recollected is compared to the eyes of white doves that seem to have been washed white with milk. As such doves are gentler and more sociable than others, so those who, inflamed with love, weep for the grace of God, are more pleasing to him than other men and he communicates himself to them. Their eyes are said to be 'beside the plentiful streams' of the tears they shed, for they do not expect to be comforted solely in their grief, but also in the spiritual joy that God will afterwards infuse into them in a superabundance that is more than the tears themselves are worth. The wise man declares that these white doves were seated beside the plentiful streams to show the determination of their will to continue weeping until God visits them, and the plenitude of the streams betokens the quantity of tears they shed.

Therefore, brother, if when you begin to practise recollection you try to aid your soul by tears, you will reach God more directly and quickly, as though by sea with a prosperous wind, like those of whom the prophet Jeremias speaks: 'Going and weeping they shall make haste, and shall seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Sion, their faces are hitherward. They shall come and shall be joined to the Lord by an everlasting covenant, which shall never be forgotten.'[1] Sion means 'a watchtower,' that is, the grace received by the heart during its recollection, whence much knowledge of God can be discerned. We must hasten to it with the feet of desire, like those of whom it is said: 'Going they went and wept.'[2]

Those who go by their corporal feet move with their body and not their heart, but those who go by desire, go by their will also. Since the feet of desire are swift, Jeremias says they hasten to seek God. Such souls weep like Magdalen when she sought him, crying: 'They have taken away my Lord: and I know not where they have laid him.'[3]

The most direct road to Sion, the grace of which our Letter speaks, is recollection; for this beginners pray weeping. Their faces (that is, their thoughts) are hitherward; they are not engaged in earthly affairs nor do they wish to know about them. Rather, they prefer solitude that they may weep more peacefully, and they say to all things, in the words of the prophet Isaias: 'Depart from me, I will weep bitterly: labour not to comfort me.'[4]

[1] Jer. l, 4, 5. [2] Ps. cxxv, 6.
[3] S. John xx, 13. [4] Isa. xxii, 4.

He who seeks heavenly grace with which to cure his soul, that without it is as land without water in God's sight, must accept no human comfort lest he lose the great through the little : that is why the prophet bids men leave him and not labour to comfort him. He says more : that his tears will be bitter, for beginners do not weep without trouble and sorrow at seeing themselves deprived of their longing to be united to the Lord by the covenant of perfect recollection. If this union has really taken place, he who has once tasted it can hardly ever forget it, and if he is lost, ever in hell he will feel deep grief at having forfeited it.[1]

It is of such tears that our Lord says : ' Can the children of the bridegroom mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them ? '[2] and we might reverse this sentence into : ' The children of the bridegroom cannot cease to mourn as long as the bridegroom is not with them,' because dutiful sons long with tears for the coming of their father, as Joseph did in Egypt,[3] and our Lord taught his children the prayer beginning : ' Our Father, who art in heaven,' etc., of which the second petition is ' Thy kingdom come,' meaning his blessed presence received by grace in our hearts, which we ought to desire with ardent longing and pray for every day and every hour.

CHAPTER IV

OF THE TEARS OF PROFICIENTS

In this way of recollection there are what may be called proficients, or those of the second class. These, when they recollect their heart, cease not to shed tears, though they do not intend to weep but simply to recollect themselves. Hence, without sighs or sobs, the tears come forth warm from the heart and flow gently from the eyes with neither interior nor exterior sound, for the mind is not bent on anything that grieves it, but solely on endeavouring to recollect the heart. Nor is there any outward sound, for without complaint or gesture, the tears come forth like the sweet waters

[1] Speaking of divine union S. Teresa says that the sign which proves the prayer of union to have been genuine is the conviction it leaves. ' God visits the soul in a manner that prevents its doubting, on returning to itself, that it dwelt in him and that he was within it, and so firmly convinced is it of this truth that although years may pass before this favour recurs, the soul can never forget it nor doubt the fact, setting aside the effects left by this prayer. . . . The conviction left in the soul is the main point ' (*Castle*, M. v, ch. i, 8).

[2] S. Matt. ix. [3] Gen. xlv.

of Siloe.[1] We should not stop them, for they go forth in silence of the heart and lips and all the senses.

Those who weep thus are like an alembic which, in spite of the fire, never ceases shedding drops of distilled warm water noiselessly and without pain. So, when the grace of the Holy Spirit sets fire to this mortal clay of ours, the alembic of the heart[2] is ignited, and by the tubes of our eyes sends forth the water of tears, figured by the hot springs found in the solitude of recollection of soul.

Of these precious tears caused by the reception within the heart of the grace of the Holy Ghost, S. Bernard says to our Lord: 'How, Lord, can we know when thou workest in the soul, and what sign dost thou give us of thy coming?' Perhaps the witnesses of this consolation and joy and its messengers are tears and sighs. If so, this is a fresh contrast and a new signification, for what have comfort and sighs, or joys and tears in common? even though they should rightly be called tears and not rather the excess of interior dew shed from above, and the purgation of the exterior man as a proof of the secret cleansing within him, as in the baptism of children the washing of the body betokens the hidden interior cleansing of the soul. But here, on the contrary, the purging and interior washing of the soul precede the outer ones of the body.

'O blessed tears, by which interior stains are washed away, and the flames of sin are quenched! Happy are those who weep thus, for they shall rejoice hereafter. By these tears, O soul, discover thy Bridegroom! Embrace him thou dost desire; be inebriated with the river of delight; draw milk and honey from the breasts of his consolation. These tears and sighs are wondrous, precious gifts and consolations given thee by thy Spouse. Let these tears furnish drink for thee; they are bread for thee by day and by night, bread that surely strengthens the heart of man and is sweeter than honey and the honeycomb.

'O Lord Jesus! if the tears that come from remembering and desiring thee are so sweet, how sweet will be our joy at thine open, clear vision? If it be so sweet to weep for thee, what will it be to

[1] Isa. viii, 6.

[2] The Saint writes: 'There is nothing tender about me, and my heart is so hard as often to grieve me. However, when the fire burns fiercely within, stony as my heart may be, it distils like an alembic.' Speaking of her tears shed after the prayer of union she says of her tears of joy: 'Blessed be thou, O my Lord, who out of a pool so filthy as I am, bringest forth water so clean as to be fit for thy table!' (*Life*, xix, 3).

rejoice with thee? But why should we give to the world these secret colloquies? Why strive to put into common words this ineffable tenderness? Those who have not felt them will not understand unless they read of them more clearly in the book of experience, being taught by the like unction; without that any printed book is useless, and they would take little interest in it unless the gloss and inward feeling were in their heart.' These words of the Saint apply to the tears shed by proficients in the practice of recollection.

CHAPTER V

OF THE TEARS OF THE PERFECT

THE perfect weep in a more perfect manner, their tears being caused by their joy at seeing that God loves them and gives them an abundance of his grace. When they think of this, considering how unworthy they are of such favours, they are overcome with joy and break forth into tears which seem like those of angels.[1] Their heart does nothing but render thanks to God, melted by his love as ice melts in the sunlight as though giving thanks to it for freeing it from its coldness. Of these tears, which are wholly joyful, it is said: 'They wept for joy.'[2]

This weeping, which is an excessive joy,[3] begins in the third state of perfect recollection to end in heaven, where 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes,'[4] so that neither mourning nor crying nor sorrow shall mingle with endless joy. But in this world, as there is no fire on earth without some damp in it, we do not possess grace so purified that we do not weep, if only because we have it in a strange land where we may lose it. So that if, during this pilgrimage, God sets our heart on flame, it feels a supreme joy which turns to tears, because it is excessive

[1] The Spanish gives *agua de ángeles*, a favourite perfume used in Spain at the time.

[2] Tob. xi, 16. The Douai version gives: 'They glorified God.'

[3] S. Teresa says that in the prayer of quiet, the tears that God sends flow with joy; they come from no effort of the soul (*Life*, xiv, 5). After perfect union, she tells us that she had sometimes found herself in a flood of tears that had flowed painlessly with such violence and rapidity that it seemed as though a cloud from heaven had shed them. In the same state of prayer a person occasionally breaks forth into floods of tears, probably from the great pain felt at seeing God offended and at thinking how many souls are lost (*Castle*, M. v, ch. ii, 9). Fray Osuna has not written on mysticism in the same systematic manner as S. Teresa, so that it is often very difficult to compare their writings with one another.

[4] Apoc. viii, 4.

and our happiness is not perfectly assured. Our tears seem to bear witness of this, as is symbolized in Genesis, where it is said : ' Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet his father in the same place : and seeing him, he fell upon his neck, and embracing him wept.'[1]

The place to which Joseph went to meet his father was called Gessen, meaning nearness or approach, for the perfect who reach this third state are very near eternal life. But to reach this and to receive the heavenly Father fitly, they must mount the chariot of ardent desire by which Elias rose, combining the wheel of the understanding with that of the will to ascend above. There humility makes them fall on his neck, for they do not yet fully receive the kiss of peace that he gives in heaven to his sons who are no longer pilgrims. Joseph who dwells in the Egypt of this body, though exalted far above his brothers, must weep in the loving arms of his father because he is still a traveller ; this prevents his joy from being complete, though in other ways he possesses all that he desires.

Then, brother, whoever you may be, however far you may have advanced, forbear not to weep. Remember, it is only mankind that weeps, and the more manly you are, the more you should do so. S. Augustine says that the more saintly a person is and full of holy desires, the more tears should he shed during prayer. O happy tears that wreck our enemies, that drown evil thoughts, that extinguish the flames of our wrong desires, that wash away the stains of our sins, that moisten the hardness of our heart and soften it towards God ! The ship of our desire sails swiftly over you to him, for the wind of the Holy Ghost never fails to purify and move our tears. The sinner bathes himself in you like the snake so that he may the more easily cast the skin of his past life by means of the narrow passage of penance.

Yours is a baptism that can be repeated, a consolation to souls and nourishment for the heart. You blot out the sentence pronounced against us which would have had to be blotted out with blood, but for you. You are corallium with which to bathe the weak eyes of sinners, and holy water to use against the devil whom you overcome and delight the angels : you draw men and God to us and extinguish the fires of hell so that those who weep here do not burn there.

If you wish, O my soul, that the sterile land of your flesh should bear fruit, water it with tears, for it is written : ' They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.'[2] If you desire that the tree of your

[1] Gen. xlvi, 29. [2] Psalm cxxv, 5.

body should be fruitful, plant it near the running waters of tears, and it will bring forth its fruit in due season, and whatsoever it shall do shall prosper.[1] If you wish to be God's dwelling-place, let the water of tears be near the door of your eyes, so that being washed there, you can go to the mount of holocaust which is your heart; for as the Israelites could not enter the Land of Promise until they had passed through the sea and the Jordan, neither can you reach perfection without first shedding bitter tears for your sins and sweet ones of longing for your Lord. Like another Axa, you should beg your heavenly Father with heartfelt sighs for the watered land. If you wish to be raised above the earth to the heights of contemplation like Noe's ark, the fountains of the great deep (betokening the wounds of your Bridegroom Jesus Christ) must break up in your heart and the floodgates of the heaven of the Divinity must be opened within you, that you may possess an abundance of sacred waters by which you may be saved, like the bride, who was called 'the well of living waters, which run with a strong stream from Libanus.'[2] You have the well of living waters when you shed tears for the humanity of your Bridegroom Christ; but if you wish that this well from the mountain should form a bridge that leads upwards to eternal life, endeavour to obtain the living stream from Libanus, that is, tears shed for Christ's Divinity.

If you desire that God should hear your prayer, you must first baptize yourself like Judith in the flood of tears, and then you can safely ask God to direct your interior way himself; and if you desire, O my soul, that your conscience should be the garden of the Lord, let it not be parched but set in it a copious fountain of tears to render it fresh and flourishing! Remember that if you are to be a little Paradise for him, there must come forth from the place of your delights a river of tears and you must desire nothing but him alone. You must purchase him with tears shed only for his love, which is the grace this Letter bids you seek by the weapons of tears. Anger arms the hands against an enemy and humility arms the eyes with tears against God, who is so tender that he complains of being wounded by the gaze of the eyes, especially if he sees them full of tears for love of him.

CHAPTER VI

THE GRACE FOR WHICH WE ASK IS COMPARED TO OIL

YOU must know, as regards the grace for which our Letter bids us ask, that the word grace has many meanings in Holy Scripture,

[1] Ps. xiii, 4. [2] Cant. iv, 15.

for, in a certain way, all things are the grace of God. His face is full of graces as are the things he freely willed to create, and he left none of them without grace or virtue, so that not only should they be under an obligation to him for giving them existence, but also because he had endowed them with different graces according to their capacity. What most surprises those who reflect upon it is that he is always as ready to bestow fresh graces as though he had given nothing, and bids us in the Gospel ask for them. He does not specify for what we are to pray, because as the plenitude of all graces is in him and every need and failing is in us, he supposes that each one will pray for what he lacks the most. Hence our Letter does not tell us what we should ask for, but merely counsels us to beg for grace.

Every mercy God shows us is called grace, though the word usually signifies that which makes us pleasing to God, and is a form or gift or habit or disposition or quality or divine influence that God alone creates in the soul of his friends to make them beloved by him and to separate them from other men. This grace is like a badge or device by which those are known who are under the banner of the Prince of glory, Jesus Christ, by whose merits God creates this grace in the soul of the faithful. If this sovereign grace that we so sorely need makes those who possess it pleasing to God from whom it comes, it may be called grace given *gratis*, since he gives it for no merit of ours, though not without the merits of Christ, in respect to which no grace has been given *gratis* save that pure grace by which his Humanity was united to God. But the grace of which we speak, which is strictly necessary for us in order to enable us to perform deeds worthy of eternal life is specially described as making men and their actions agreeable to God. They could not please him unless they were first made acceptable to him by it. This it is that makes men work *gratis* for him, not like day-labourers. For if we receive grace from him *gratis* (which is the origin of the word grace) we ought to give him our efforts *gratis* and not sell him the fruit of his labours,[1] for they are more his doing than our own. Hence, according to

[1] 'I am acquainted with two persons,' says S. Teresa, no doubt alluding to herself and S. John of the Cross, 'on whom our Lord had bestowed some of these supernatural favours. They were both so desirous of serving his Majesty at their own cost without these great consolations, and so longed to suffer for his sake, they they remonstrated with him for giving them these favours, and if it had been possible, would have refused to receive them. . . . I believe that these desires are supernatural and proper to very fervent souls who wish to prove to God that they do not serve him for pay' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. ix, 20, 21.)

S. Jerome, God did not choose to make men so free that they could save themselves without grace, for they would have insulted him grossly by demanding the kingdom of heaven almost by force ; and God would have afforded our free-will an occasion of contempt and insubordination if we had not felt at every step and every hour the need of his grace, which is a gracious gift that makes us pleasing to his Majesty, by which we give ourselves to him *gratis* and he to us.

It must be noticed that our Lord wishes us to serve him *gratis* without wages ; not that he wishes to avoid payment, but that he may give us more. For he who sells only deserves the fair price of his goods, but he who freely gives all he has is worthy of receiving whatever the recipient owns ; and this is what God wishes to bestow on us, if we serve him *gratis* by means of grace, for our works deserve glory not on their own account but on that of the grace with which they are sealed. As a coin of base metal would not have its value but for the stamp it bears, so the merit of our works consists chiefly in their stamp of grace, being themselves of very base material. Though, according to the learned, grace is the same as charity, yet Holy Scripture compares it to many things because of the many effects it has on our soul. It is called a new spirit, for it renews man's heart ; a fire, for it consumes sins ; unction, because it heals spiritual wounds ; light, for it illumines the mind ; virtue, for it strengthens our weakness ; water that quenches the thirst of our soul, and a lighted torch that inflames us with love for God ; peace which pacifies and makes peace between sensuality and the intellect, and a ray of light that penetrates the earth from the Sun of Justice.

The grace that makes us pleasing to God is also called daily bread as it ensures us against the hunger that is to come. It is named the river that flows from the place of delight, for it comes forth from God to delight our souls ; and a cloud that goes before us on account of the coolness it affords. Being our guide, it is named the column of fire that illumines our night ; and a diamond that attracts us to God and heavenly things. It is like clear water because it purifies us, and is termed the hand of God because it raises us when we fall. It is a spiritual seed that takes root in the soul, to which God gives growth ; it is wine to make glad the heart of man and cause him to forget his troubles, and rain, for it fertilizes the earth of our heart, so as to produce the fruit of good works. It is called the life of the just, for grace gives life to the soul, as the soul does to the body. It is a ring that weds the soul to God ; a honeycomb bringing us divine sweetness, and

the best robe that adorns the prodigal son who returns to his father. It is the festal garment that admits us to the marriage of the Lamb, without which we should be sent away ; the shoes of the prince's daughter (our soul) which protect the feet of her desires from the dust of earthly things so that she can better mount to what is heavenly. It is a celestial dew that, if it enters the soul which ought to open to receive it like a shell on the brink of this world's sea, will produce within it precious stones of various qualities as the dew does within the oyster.

The soul containing grace is a lovely flower that promises the fruit of celestial life ; grace is the key of heaven which we must take with us if we wish to enter ; the ship that bears us safely over the ocean of this life to the port of salvation. The grace bestowed on us freely by God is compared to oil, of which I will speak more fully. The first reason is because it flows from Christ our Redeemer, of whose fulness we all receive, and who is called a fruitful olive tree in the house of God—the Church. The product of the olive is abundance of sweet oil, which symbolizes grace, and when poured on the wounds of the sinner by the good Samaritan, cures him immediately.

Our Lord bade his Apostles anoint the sick with this oil and it healed them,[1] for Christ gave his holy grace to them by the merits of the Apostles so that they were healed in soul and body, the outward effects bearing witness to the interior.

As oil has the power of sweetening bitter things such as vegetables, so grace destroys the bitterness of sorrows. Therefore, among the other benefits God bestowed on Jerusalem, he fed it with oil,[2] betokening that he gave its people grace to suffer peacefully, which is no small boon.

Another property common to oil and grace is that the former consecrates men for earthly dignities ; the latter consecrates the just for God. Therefore of the oil of grace it is written that the princes shall be anointed with holy oil.

The oil of grace has also the power of filling the souls of contemplatives with joy. Thus David said to God : ' Thou hast anointed my head with oil ' ;[3] that is, the higher part of my soul. Since grace has the quality of engendering men newly to God, Zacharias calls the saints ' sons of oil,' that is, of the grace that begot them anew spiritually to the Lord. As oil floats on all other liquids, so grace holds precedence over the rest of the gifts, virtues, blessings, and fruits of the Holy Spirit, for without the grace that makes us pleasing to God we cannot be saved, whatever

[1] S. Mark vi, 13. [2] Ezech. xvi. [3] Ps. xxii, 5.

else we have. As, however skilled and practised a man may be in any art, he cannot practise it without the proper instruments, so whatever other virtues and qualities a man may have, without grace he cannot perform actions worthy of eternal life.

Another effect of oil is to free from death, as is shown by Ismahel's sparing the lives of the men who had stores of oil and other things in their field.[1] This signifies that the devil can do no harm to those who have grace in the field of their conscience.

The oil of grace also frees us from our debts to God, symbolized by the widow's oil, the grace of the hapless soul, which, expended in good works, frees us from debt and the account we have to render to God.[2]

Grace also illuminates the human intellect, like the oil that lighted the tabernacle of the testimony[3] which betokens the faithful soul. And because all our actions should be performed in grace, God commanded that oil should be offered in the daily sacrifice.[4]

Then, O my soul, if you wish to go forth worthily to receive your Bridegroom, first receive with due preparation this oil in the vessel of your heart,[5] so that with the wise virgins you may safely leave this earthly dwelling-place and be admitted to the eternal bridals of heaven, which you cannot enter without the true oil of grace. If you say that it is not in your power to obtain this oil, ask for it as the sick man does on his death-bed, which suffices to obtain for him the virtue of the Sacrament. Remember, we die daily for we sin daily, therefore never cease to beg for the oil of grace as this Letter of our Alphabet advises you. Then the dove,[6] the Holy Spirit, will come quickly, bringing you not only the oil of grace, but the olive branch, which is Christ. If you plant this within you, it will remain, retained by your love. Water it with the water of pure tears of which we first spoke, that it may grow within you. Then, if the devil offers you the poison of foul temptation or sin, ask God with tears for the oil of his grace, which will at once protect and free you, driving away all that is harmful and dangerous.

CHAPTER VII

OTHER KINDS OF GRACE

It must be remarked that besides the grace above mentioned there are many graces called *gratis datae* with which God does not give himself except in conjunction with the grace of which we have

[1] Jer. xli, 8. [2] 4 Kings iv. [3] Exod. xxvii, 20–1.
[4] Num. xxviii, 5. [5] S. Matt. xxv. [6] Gen. viii.

spoken, to which they are all subordinate, for it is supreme and excels them all. Yet we must not despise them though God does not bestow himself with them, for it is a great boon that he should give them, and they are intended to make us seek him better and for the utility of the Church and other good objects. As they are numerous, I will not describe them, but will merely say that the grace which makes a man pleasing to God is chiefly intended for his personal advantage, and that, as a rule, graces *gratis datae* are for the good of others. Although Holy Scripture often mentions the latter grace without the former (which is the higher), yet they generally go together ; for though God graciously gives to all, he gives more to those who love him than to his enemies. Therefore, strive for the first and you may possess many of the second.

There is this difference between them: the first is hidden within the soul unknown to those who possess it, while the others manifest themselves and soon become known. Perhaps God keeps the former grace concealed for two reasons : first that we should not become vain-glorious on account of our prosperity, for this grace is worth more than all the rest put together and of greater value to us than are all created things. He who owns it is richer than if he owned all the graces *gratis datae* and all power in heaven and earth and hell. Alone, it outweighs the whole of them, for the wise man says that nothing desirable can be compared with the first grace ; for by its means the Lord gives himself, beside whom the angels are but as the sand of the seashore ; the heavens but as empty wind, and mankind as the dust of the earth.

The second reason why the first grace is secret and hidden is that we may not cease to strive for it and beg it of our Lord with tears, so that it may increase daily and unawares we may grow richer. Since this grace is so needful and you do not know whether you possess it, pray for it above all else, otherwise you would be looking for the lining without knowing whether you had the cloth to cut out your coat. It would be like sowing seed on parched soil or building on shifting sand. Let the chief aim of all your tears and prayers and sacrifices and whatever good works you may perform be to induce God to send you his holy grace to make you pleasing to his Majesty, and then ask him for what you most need in order to serve him better.

On this account, preachers, when they ask for the grace of the Holy Ghost before a sermon, though they seem to be begging for the gift of tongues and power of preaching, which are graces *gratis datae*, must in their heart intend first to pray for the grace

that makes them pleasing to God, as well as the grace to preach well which makes them pleasing to men, that they may return it to him as the man who catches the ball returns it to him who threw it. Then they will succeed : otherwise, they will set things in the wrong order.

Those who give themselves unreservedly to the holy exercise of recollection receive many kinds of grace from God, each in his own manner, according to his capacity and merits and the preparations he has made for it. Not only do they receive numberless graces, but these increase, and they begin to attain in this exercise to what is called consummate grace, according to the wise man : (it) ' shall give to thy head increase of graces, and protect thee with a noble crown.'[1] Our spiritual head, according to the gloss, is the chief and highest part of our soul to which those rise who truly recollect themselves in order to receive increase of grace. I say ' increase,' for to rise thus is a grace bestowed on us by God, who leads us to it and afterwards gives us farther increase to enable us to mount to him from whom, in firm confidence, we receive the crown that entitles us to the promised kingdom.

Speaking of this crown, I knew two holy men much given to recollection on whose heads were seen, even in this life, the crowns they now wear in heaven. It took place in this way : one of them was walking in procession bearing a tall cross above which was seen an angel holding a crown, who, being asked in spirit for whom this precious diadem was destined, answered that it was for him who bore the cross. By this he meant that all those who bear the spiritual cross of our Lord, which is recollection, that, as it were, nails our three powers to God, will receive the merits of him who was crowned with thorns on the cross.

The other holy man, when on his death-bed, complained that he could not recollect his heart, which grieved him more than his illness. On the day of his death, just before he died, a beautiful crown was seen suspended over his venerable head, adorning it marvellously and rendering his face resplendent with beauty. The person who saw it revealed it after the sick man's death, for the glory of God and of his servant. He said that he saw it with the eyes of his soul, not those of his body, though he had often washed them with tears that rendered them capable of enlightening the eyes of his soul with which he saw the favour granted to his friend.

[1] Prov. iv, 9.

ELEVENTH TREATISE

ADVISES US TO KEEP GOD EVER IN MEMORY, SAYING: 'REMEMBER GOD CONSTANTLY, AND CRY TO HIM WITH SIGHS.'[1]

CHAPTER I

WE MUST NOT RECOLLECT RICHES OR INJURIES

THOSE accustomed to act unreasonably generally misinterpret warnings and good advice, and endeavour to pervert them for their own evil ends. They try to wrest the clearest teaching so that it may seem to favour their bad customs and they may not have to follow it. They warp the Rule to suit their own behaviour instead of obeying it.

This can be said of those who renounce earthly riches and try to retrieve them in other ways,[2] or regret giving them up: they keep their lost possessions ever in their memory and beg God to restore them, yet think they are thus following the advice given in this Letter of the Alphabet.

Others continually keep in remembrance injuries they have received and rarely think of anything else. Revolving them continually in their mind, they exaggerate the malice of their opponents, and by reflecting on their own innocence,[3] their desire for

[1] In Spanish M is the eleventh letter of the alphabet, represented here by *Memoria ten de contino. . . .*

[2] Throughout the *Way of Perfection* S. Teresa strongly insists on poverty. See chs. ii, xii, and xxxvi, etc. In the latter she says: 'Rest assured of this—people may desire honours or possessions in monasteries as well as outside them (yet the sin is greater as the temptation is less), but such souls, although they may have spent years in prayer, or rather in speculations (for perfect prayer eventually destroys these vices), will never make great progress nor enjoy the real fruit of prayer' (see also *Concep.* ii). Franciscan influence is clearly shown in S. Teresa's advice to her nuns about poverty: 'This must be the motto embroidered on our banners, which we must try to follow in our house, our clothes, our words, and what is far more, in our hearts' (*Camino*, ch. ii, 6).

[3] The whole of ch. xxxvi of the *Way of Perfection* treats of the forgiveness of injuries. S. Teresa writes: 'I cannot believe that one who has approached so near to the Source of all mercy, which has shown

vengeance grows, and they sigh to God, begging him to do justice.

Others are so wicked that, after having renounced pleasures, they do not renounce them in their heart, but remember them constantly, like the children of Israel,[1] who, with sighs, begged God to bring back the former times. In secret ways they try to recover what they have left: they turn to it the head of their desire, like Lot's wife and take their idols with them as Rachel did, that is, the image of their pleasures kept in their memory.

Such persons though they seem by their words to call to God, yet if you observe the manner in which they say them and their intentions, you will find that they are calling to the devil. If they pronounce the name of God, they harm themselves by it, for they will not follow the advice of the Psalm: 'Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear: and forget thy people and thy father's house. And the King shall greatly desire thy beauty: for he is the Lord thy God, and him they shall adore.'[2]

The people we must forget are the participation and assemblage of the vices, from which we must withdraw by good works. God also desires us to forget the house of our wicked father the devil. This house is the depraved imagination in which the devil sets his whole snare, making an impression on it, for it is the mould in which he casts all his works to be published in action. His evil people—wicked men—then see what has been wrought in concealment. But the soul which forgets these things is promised that God, the eternal King, will not only receive but 'desire' it. To show us that this desire of God is truth and no fiction, strong and not feeble, the beauty of the soul is praised in this verse to teach it why the Lord longs for it. As we keep in mind what we most wish for, it follows that God continually remembers the soul he loves. He even calls to it, as it were with sighs, according to the Psalm: 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand be forgotten. Let my tongue cleave to my jaws, if I do not remember thee: if I make not Jerusalem the beginning of my joy.'[3]

the soul what it really is and all that God has pardoned it, would not instantly and willingly forgive and be at peace and remain well-affected towards anyone who has offended her.' Mother Isabel of Jesus once said to the Saint: 'Mother, how can you bear their saying such things about a nun?' (People had been speaking very ill of her at the time.) She replied: 'They have good reason for it. I am surprised at their not flogging me. What do you suppose I care for their words? No music could be sweeter to my ears.' Constant reference is made to forgiveness of injuries throughout her writings. (See especially *ibid.* ch. xiii.) [1] Num. xi. [2] Ps. xliv, 11, 12. [3] Ps. cxxxvi, 5, 6.

The spiritual, peaceful Jerusalem is the soul given to recollection. In order that its services may correspond to the divine mercies it has received, it ought not to forget him who so solemnly and lovingly vows not to forget it. Not only should the soul make God the beginning of its joy, but it should ever long and sigh for him alone, as this Letter of the Alphabet bids us : ' Remember God constantly and cry to him with sighs.'

CHAPTER II

HOW WE OUGHT TO EMPLOY OUR MEMORY

THIS Letter treats of two things very favourable to recollection of which we will speak in their order.

First we must notice that we are told to remember constantly, which means that we must keep our memory occupied. No wonder it says ' constantly,' for our memory is so formed that even though we try to keep it vacant, it occupies itself against our will. The first part of this Letter of the Alphabet does not state what subjects we must call to mind, for they are many : it blames the forgetful and those who do not keep their memory for what is profitable. Some men are like lynxes, who, S. Jerome says, do not recollect anything except what is before their eyes, and when they turn away, forget everything but what they see. There are men we call idiotic and stupid : out of indolence they leave their mouth open for the flies to enter. Seneca says such men waste their life, for they never think of the past.

The life of the past is kept before the memory of the wise, for things now dead live in it ; there is the treasury of wisdom, the ark of truth, the living book of mankind, the womb within which our soul keeps its children lest they should be slain by forgetfulness, which, S. Gregory declares, is a kind of death that deprives the memory of what was there before, as death drives those it slays from the present life. Therefore, as God cannot forget, S. Paul says he ' only hath immortality,'[1] keeping in his eternal memory the infinite knowledge begotten by his understanding in which all things live in endless unforgetfulness. For there, more fully than in any sketch, dwell the ideas of all things, and the seminal modes of all that is possible. Hence, though the thing itself may die, it does not die in the divine memory, wherein all things are registered eternally and fully known, so that, in a perfect book of life, the angels may read whatever God wishes

[1] 1 Tim. vi, 16.

them to learn. In that book alone is found the essence of individual beings, for there they are immortal, sharing in the immortality of God to whom, and for whom, and by whom all things live.

Then, O man, thou who art the image of God, be not so oblivious as to seem a counterfeit, the very opposite of what you represent. For if in God all things live and in you they perish, you will be his very opposite. Resemble not the unhealthy stomach that rejects its food, for your spiritual life will be very weak unless you retain in the stomach of your memory the food of good doctrine. Be not an empty cask that only keeps the lees.

For those who have left the world, it is very useful to keep constantly in mind the day when, either by constraint or for the sake of leading a better life, they withdrew from it. Let them daily commemorate the Saint on whose feast they made a vow of greater perfection, to remind them to keep to the intention they then had, to renew the resolution daily that was then made by them, to rejoice at having left the world, and to start again to earn fresh merits. He who does this will go from strength to strength and increase in merit in God's sight. He will fulfil the counsel of that same Lord : ' Remember this day in which you came forth out of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage, for with a strong hand hath the Lord brought you forth out of this place : that you eat no leavened bread.'[1]

We have good reason to remember that blessed day in which the Lord brought us forth out of the house of bondage, meaning the custom and continual occasions of sinning by which the devil is served with wearisome labour. The Lord, setting aside many another soul, chose to elect us solely by his free grace, and not because we serve him better than they would have done.

It is said ' with a strong hand,' for we shall find that our right hand was stronger and more unwearied then in performing acts of virtue, and has, by our own fault, become weaker every day. Remembering this, we must remedy the matter.

[1] Exod. xiii, 3. Of gratitude for their vocation to the religious state S. Teresa writes : ' I do not think you realize how much you owe to God for withdrawing you so entirely from earthly cares, from occasions of sin, and from the society of the world ' (*Camino*, ch. iii, 1). ' It often delights me when in my sisters' company to see how the joy of their hearts is so great that they vie with one another in praising our Lord for placing them in this convent. It is evident that their praises come from the very depths of their souls. I should like you to do this often, sisters, for when one begins, she incites the rest to imitate her ' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. vi, 14).

Lastly it is said that the Lord brought us out lest we should eat 'leavened bread,' that is, partake of wrongful pleasures, for every action we perform is our bread and of our own making. But we must use no leaven, for it would corrupt the dough of our deeds and turn our conduct back to the old leaven—the evil customs we have given up. Then we should not only be no better than we were before, but worse, like bad bread dyed with cochineal. To avoid this, keep constantly in mind the day on which you 'put on the new man,' that you may the better preserve the good purpose you then held. Think of the proverb, 'Keep a red-letter day safe in your house,' as referring to the day you left the world.[1] If you think about what you were then, you will find you have never been better, so you should keep that day in the house of your heart to remember it continually and to thank and praise the Lord who made that happy day for you: thus, whenever you recollect it, you will be as meritorious as you were then. Christians devoted to the sacred Passion of our Lord should keep it constantly in their mind, for their devotion consists in this, not in speaking about it. Undoubtedly he who is most devout will most frequently recall it as the subject he loves best. The blessed S. Bernard says: 'He who has a devotion to Christ knows how beneficial it is to Christian piety, and how fitting and useful it is to the servant of God that, at least during some portion of the day, he should recollect more attentively the benefits of Christ's Passion and Redemption, rejoice in them peacefully in his mind and keep them faithfully in memory, which is to eat spiritually the Body of Christ and drink his Blood as he commanded.'[2]

S. Bernard wrote this to the monks of Mont-Dieu, who were so perfect that he compared them to the fathers of the desert who, he said, had risen again in their persons. Yet for such perfect men it was a slight thing that they should meditate for an hour a day on our Lord's Passion, which, the Saint says, he always bore in his heart while a novice. In our times, when spiritual perfection is at a low ebb, it is usual in many places for the religious to spend two hours a day in prayer.[3] But it must be noticed that S. Bernard does not advise this as the whole and principal exercise of the monks, for he valued more highly the memory of God, which is better suited to the recollected than any of the others mentioned, though the latter are good. He named no special time

[1] The Spanish has: *El buen día mételo en tu casa.*

[2] S. Luke xxii, 19, 20.

[3] S. Teresa gave her sisters two hours a day for private prayers; one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

for remembering God, the chief practice, which he wished should be done constantly. We should keep this in mind above all things as being the best and most suitable for those who follow this holy exercise of recollection. Perhaps S. Bernard, who himself kept to it so fervently, felt this when he wrote formerly to the same monks: 'The devotion which in itself is worth all else is the continual remembrance of God and the constant striving of the mind after an unwearied tender love for him, so that no day or hour shall not find the servant of God engaged in this work, in endeavouring to make progress, or in the enjoyment of divine consolations.'

In these brief words the Saint well describes what is meant by keeping God in memory, how useful it is, and how constant it ought to be. He speaks to those who have practised it and know something of it, who strive to keep the memory of God ever before them, as our Letter of the Alphabet advises.

In order to make clear what this means, you must notice that, according to S. Ambrose, memory is the sole remedy for the absence of past happiness and hope of that to come. He gives as an example our first parents, who after their exile, found their cure and solace amid their troubles in recollecting the waters of Gehon, in the rustling of the air in the woodlands of the earthly Paradise, the tree of life, the beauty of the reflection of the sunshine on the rivers, original innocence and justice, and in the obedience choired forth by all the inferior creatures. The Children of Israel did the same; they counted their past labours well spent when they called to mind the promised land and its delights.

It is easy to recall visible things, for we have seen them and they are impressed on the memory; but God being invisible, no man has seen him and he cannot be imagined: hence it is difficult to keep him in one's thoughts. Yet as his perfections and divine attributes are many, we can remember him by means of them. According to a holy Doctor of the Church, these will arouse our torpid love for divine matters, and will by their virtue greatly foster our love and devotion for the Lord. We can be reminded of God by almost all things, if we attribute their effects more to him than to themselves, and reflect that they were created by the same God as we were, as is the fact. This short piece of advice shows that without wood you cannot warm yourself in cold weather, though it is not really the wood that warms you, but the fire that penetrates it and causes the heat.

In this way you can in a more spiritual manner reflect that though water affords you refreshment, it is given you by God

rather than by the water, which without him could not refresh you, as the wood could not warm you without the fire. You may also understand or contemplate the fact that it is God who clothes you more than the garments you wear, for without him they could not clothe you ; he delights your sense of smell more than does the delicious and sweet fragrance of the flowers ; he nourishes you more than food, he gives stability to the ground and supports you, for it could no more support you without him than the wood without fire could heat you.

This does not mean that you are to think of God as the form of things, though in fact his co-operation is more necessary for their action than form is for the material to give it being. If you think of all things in this way you can preserve a perpetual remembrance of God ; for you are continually using them and he works in them all. Thus God nourishes you more by the bread than the bread does ; strengthens you more than the wine you drink ; gives you greater sweetness than the honey gives, for without him it would not be sweet, but he is sweet without the honey. Then, since you constantly keep in mind your food and clothes and other needs, you should keep God still more in mind, for he brings about all that these things supply you with. Yet you do not remember him, though every time you drink good wine from your earthen jar, you think of the vineyard or vine that grew it, without which the wine would not exist. But it would have neither existence nor taste nor colour but for God who gives it being, and preserves it and gives it the qualities proper to it. Recognize this fact clearly, for if God withdrew his aid, it would return to nothingness.

Hence it is evident that God serves men even now, as the Gospel declares,[1] since he serves us by means of the things that render us service, carrying out their special work through them better than they could themselves. Then keep God in continual remembrance since he serves you continually, sustaining the posts of your bed while you sleep, and supplying you with air to form the words when you speak. He exerts his action on the air and on you, without which you would be as helpless as though you had no life. But note this : though God serves you[2] in this way,

[1] S. Matt. xx, 28.

[2] ' How little is all we can do for so generous a God who died for us, who created us, who gives us being, that we should not think ourselves happy to be able to acquit ourselves of part of the debt we owe him for having served us, without asking for fresh favours ! I am loth to use this expression, yet so it is, for he did nothing else during the whole time he lived in this world but serve us ' (*Castle*, M. iii, ch. i, 14).

if you make bad use of his service, he is silent and picks up stones,[1] and as you use his service in this world, so will he serve you in the next.

It is certain that you could not kill a man unless God helped you to raise your arm to wound him, but I warn you that though he may dissimulate now and help you in order not to deprive you of the liberty he has bestowed on you, it will be very different hereafter, and he will avenge himself. You will pay in his territory for the insults you offered him in your wicked country of this world. Then you will be forced to see and remember his strict justice, which you would not think of now nor bear in mind his most loving services, if services they may be called.

CHAPTER III

OF A HIGHER KIND OF MEMORY

THE perfect memory of God that I now wish to explain is a more important and sublime exercise than the last. It is very suitable for the recollection, which it presupposes; and to be perfect, this memory of God must be built on recollection, which it perfects and makes more living. Hence the memory of God based on recollection is a spiritual resurrection. S. John says: 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord' by perfect recollection, which is a kind of death for man since he does not use his exterior senses. Though these men are blessed, those are still more so who rise in the Lord, which is not incredible to those who have experienced somewhat of this resurrection. For many saints who have slept rise with that same Lord to enter the holy city of the peaceful soul and 'appear unto many': that is, to all that had previously died in such a man through recollection. For this memory of God causes all that is interior and exterior to his human nature to act in a simple manner that is compatible with recollection and is a representation of God in his pure Essence. If a man is accustomed to practise recollection, it is strengthened in him and seems to raise him from the dead, vivifying his entrails and his heart and eyes, but this is as regards God only, for this memory concerns him alone.

The memory of God that we must possess is not of the sensitive nature; I mean that it affects the intellectual memory more

[1] Fray Osuna uses a very quaint idiom here: *Dios calla y toma piedras*—'God is silent and picks up stones.'

than the sensitive, for the former contains in itself a general representation and is universal without occupying itself with details of special characteristics. In a sublime manner it thinks of God as limitless being, boundless goodness, the first principle that had no beginning, and an end that never terminates; a fulness that leaves nothing empty, and invincible strength; a wisdom that ignores nothing, so that when we call God to mind and give him some name, it must be general, omitting all that betokens limitation or imperfection. Thus if we call him an Ocean, we must add, 'without soundings or shore'; if we say he is a Teacher, we must say, 'the universal Teacher who cannot err'; if we speak of his Majesty we must continue, 'that cannot be diminished.' In this way the intellectual memory operates without stopping the recollection of the one, sole Good.

If you find this way of exercising the memory concerning God difficult, at least try that of recollecting the heart. Setting aside all your cares, keep the holy name of God in your mind as long as possible, sighing to him as this Letter of the Alphabet bids you. Thus you may make great progress and attain to the veritable memory of God which, S. Jerome says, drives out all evils. If this exercise suits you, it may be used while you are reading or writing or doing other work for which attention is needed. But if you constantly practise it on such occasions, the time will come when you will not be able to go on with what you are doing, for when this memory of God increases, it takes possession of the whole man and stops all other occupations.

Many sacred personages in the Old Testament were given to this exercise. Among them was the saintly old Tobias, who, as one that knew by experience its value, left it to his son as a kind of spiritual inheritance, saying: 'All the days of thy life have God in thy mind.'[1]

Those devoted to this practice resemble the angels, for they strive constantly to keep in God's presence, as Tobias said that he had done. David declares the same of himself: 'I set the Lord always in my sight: for he is at my right hand, that I be not moved. Therefore my heart hath been glad, and my tongue hath rejoiced: moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope.'[2]

The gloss of Cassiodorus comments on the latter words: 'Those who always set the Lord in the sight of their soul do not give way to sin.' S. Jerome speaks to the same effect, for both writers knew that a man who constantly strives to keep God in mind forgets sin. David teaches us the other advantages gained by it.

[1] Tob. iv, 6. [2] Ps. xv, 8, 9.

The prophet Elias also practised it, for he said with a kind of oath : ' As the Lord liveth, the God of Israel, in whose sight I stand.'[1] To think or remember that one is in the presence of God and to represent him as present before one, and to hold him in mind, are the same thing.

Eliseus, the disciple of Elias, speaks in the same way,[2] so that probably the saintly prophet taught him this exercise. It consists in thinking that we are in the presence of God who always beholds us ; therefore we should be as quiet and composed in soul and body as pages who wait on their master, awaiting his commands.

Since this realization of the divine presence should be continual, David says : ' Seek ye the Lord, and be strengthened : seek ye his face evermore. Remember his marvellous works which he hath done ; his wonders, and the judgements of his mouth.'[3] Our chief duty is to seek God ; this is the last thing we do and the most difficult, especially in the manner described, which consists in an intention to attend to God by a continual remembrance of him. Lest we should grow weary or desist through thinking that we shall not succeed in what we have begun, we need resolution so that we may feel certain of finding him who goes forth to receive those who desire and seek him, as is shown in the case of the Magdalen. Of this S. Augustine says : ' We have to seek the " face," that is, the presence of the Lord, which, though it is found by faith, we must continue to search for in this life so that hereafter we may have it by presence.'

The Saint seems speaking here of two manners of seeking God : one, by faith which is suitable for all ; the other by the remembrance above-mentioned, which adds somewhat to the first. This search is accompanied by a lively solicitude of heart that rarely forgets its object, though it sometimes makes it oblivious of all else, however necessary to it. Hence the disciples, when they journeyed with our Lord, forgot to take the bread they would require. Referring to this verse, S. Augustine says : ' O how eternally will he be sought, for the beloved is always desired, always sought lest he should be absent but ever present ! The wicked may well fear the presence that the righteous loves.'

David goes on to tell those who are less perfect how they can keep God in mind by thinking of his marvellous and excellent works and his wondrous judgements. This will recall to the mind their transcendent Author, the sole memory of whom surpasses all his works, especially if it resembles that spoken of by the sage :

[1] 3 Kings xvii, 1. [2] 4 Kings iii, 14.
[3] Ps. civ, 4, 5.

'Forget not thy friend in thy mind, and be not unmindful of him in thy deeds.'[1]

This memory must be within the soul, established in the heart, for if we are to remember God, it must be as our most intimate friend, dearer to us than father or brother. This will make it easy for us to bear him in mind, for our close amity will root and bind him to our heart so that we shall offer and dedicate to him all our actions, bearing him in mind throughout, performing them for love of him, and yielding them to him as the fruit borne by our continual recollection.

CHAPTER IV

THAT THIS MEMORY MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY SIGHS OF LONGING

THE second part of this Letter follows from the first, for frequent recollection of what is good leads to a desire for it. Hence, having bidden you to keep God constantly in mind, it tells you to call him to you by sighs, so that the memory may serve the will—the power that communicates most closely and intimately with God.[2]

Memory of God would be imperfect, did it not induce us to call to him with the longing of our heart. The devils remember God, but their memory does not lead them to desire him with their will. Hence it is said to be distorted and worse than that of the foulest sinner when he recollects that he will hear the terrible sentence: 'Depart, ye cursed.' Not such is the memory that the recollected have of God: it is like a breeze that revives the dying flame of love, or a drop of vinegar that excavates the ground of the heart, or the gentle voice of one we deeply love, causing a sweet delight to the heart of the hearer; or it resembles a perfume that makes us long for the source from whence it comes, or the remembrance of a bygone pleasure we once enjoyed.

Of this memory we may quote David: 'There is no one in death that is mindful of thee.'[3] He who holds it is not dead nor is his charity dying: he is strong in the life of ardent love. Regarding our second comparison, Jeremias exclaims: 'I will be mindful and remember, and my soul shall languish within me.'[4] He writes this because this memory resembles a ray of sunlight that melts the soul, making it as soft as wax. Regarding the third

[1] Ecclus. xxxvii, 6. The Spanish gives *en tus obras*—'in thy works,' but the Douai version has 'in thy riches.'

[2] Scholastic theology gives the name of the 'will' to love.

[3] Ps. vi, 6. [4] Lam. iii, 20.

comparison, the prophet sings: 'I remembered God and was delighted.'[1] Concerning the fourth Osias exclaims: 'His memorial shall be as the wine of Libanus.'[2] Regarding the fifth, the wise man declares: 'His remembrance shall be as sweet as honey in every mouth, and as music at a banquet of wine.'[3] Hence it is written of Tobias: 'Because he was mindful of the Lord with all his heart, God gave him favour.'[4]

Since this memory of God is so profitable, you ought to long for it with all your heart, and, sighing, cry to God to grant it you as did Isaias, saying: 'My soul hath desired thee in the night: yea, and with my spirit within me in the morning early I will watch to thee.'[5] In this night of recollection which is our illumination in our delights, we must attend to God with the interior spirit and with the intellectual memory of which we speak in order that our affections may watch on him in the early morning; that is, the commencement of the joy here received, which morning leads to the midday of which the bride seeks information from God with sighs of longing.

It should be noticed that there are two ways among many others in which we can cry to God: either that he may now give us the graces of consolation or speedily grant us the glory promised to us. Both are good and pleasing to the Lord. As for the first, it is evident that the just Lord will be very willing to come to console the just, since he rains the waters of his consolation on the unjust, and came in person to seek sinners, to show us how quickly he comes when called for by those who hate sin. If the thirsty go to him, he opens the door to them and delights them with the feast of his grace, that they may be fully satisfied who for love of him have left fleshly pleasures which are the food of swine.

Then, my soul, accustom yourself to remember him who never forgets you: desire him with loving sighs from your inmost being: cease not to utter them within yourself and even to pronounce them impulsively when you are alone. Even solely on this account love of solitude is a great help and very pleasing to the Beloved. But while, in public, you should ever sigh to him and long for him simply, in a way that remains unnoticed by those who do not love him, for they would think you were wearied by some pain or trouble, not knowing that the greatest pain and penance for true servants of God is his absence and the withdrawal of their feeling that his grace dwells within their heart. They know that a very helpful remedy for this is to sigh and long for the Lord

[1] Ps. lxxvi, 4. [2] Osee xiv, 8. [3] Ecclus. xlix, 2.
[4] Tob. i, 13. [5] Isa. xxvi, 9.

like tender doves, because no voice so penetrates his divine ears as ardent desires. Not only does he hear them, but they are an arrow that inflicts a wound of love, drawing blood and overcoming him who can only be conquered by love. On account of this alone he will 'satisfy thy desire with good things,' as David says,[1] for you must know that a sigh coming from the heart is a swift arrow aimed thence by the bow of desire at the Lord who dwells in the heavens.[2] It does not return to you without God himself, as the psalm declares: 'Thou hast given him his heart's desire: and hast not withholden from him the will of his lips.'[3] With good reason was Daniel called 'a man of desires,' as we should speak of a man of great strength that makes him sure of gaining the victory. So let him whose desires and sighs for the Lord are fervent, believe that he will soon obtain what he asks. He might quote the words of Jeremias: 'In the desire of his heart (he) snuffed up the wind of his love.'[4] The Psalmist writes: 'I opened my mouth and panted.'[5] In the Latin and Spanish the meaning is, 'I attracted the Spirit,' yet it is quicker and even easier to attract it with the soul's interior desire alone, for the motive of the desire is what God looks at, more than the open mouth.

If you wish, O devout soul, to call the Lord who is swift to come, you have a speedy messenger by whom to summon him. You have your sigh for him, as ready and prepared for all you ask as was the angel Raphael to obey Tobias. Your sigh is your angel and will be skilful enough if you send it to God, for it knows how to negotiate your affairs with him secretly with the greatest wisdom and prudence. It brings forward all that is in your favour and wins him to do all you wish. It prepares you to receive him, purges you with its loving pain, enlightens you with its understanding and perfects you by granting your petition. Therefore S. Bernard said of this sigh: 'Oh, how glad the angel is, how he delights and is happy, and turning to the Lord, says: "I thank thee, divine Majesty, for giving him the desire of his heart and not withholding from him the will of his lips!"'

[1] Ps. lxi, 5.

[2] 'I have been wondering whether there is any difference between the will and the love. . . . I think there must be, for it appears to me that love is an arrow shot by the will, which if aimed with all its force, freed from what is earthly, and directed solely to God, must wound his Majesty in good earnest. When it has pierced God himself, who is love, it rebounds, having won the precious prize I will describe' (*Concep.* vi, 6). (This prize is divine union.)

[3] Ps. xx, 3. [4] Jer. ii, 24. [5] Ps. cxviii, 131.

It is this same angel who in every place, as the faithful follower of the soul, moves and warns it with continual inspirations, saying : ' Delight in the Lord, and he will give thee the requests of thy heart.'[1] At another time he will say : ' Trust in the Lord and do good ' : or again : ' If it make any delay, wait for it : for it shall surely come, and it shall not be slack.'[2] But to God the angel cries : ' As the hart panteth after the fountains of water ; so this soul panteth after thee, O God.[3] In the night time it desireth thee, and will keep watch for thee in the morning.'[4] The angel also says to him : ' It has spread forth its hands all the day to thee : give it what it asks, for it calls thee : bend down towards it and hear its prayer ; look on it and come down from thy holy heaven and visit its solitude.' O faithful protector ! who, knowing of the mutual love between the soul and God, feels no jealousy ; it seeks no favour for itself, but for its lord. Acting as mediator between the lover and the Beloved, it offers up prayers and brings back their answer. It arouses the one and placates the other, and sometimes, though rarely, manifests the one to the other, either enrapturing the soul or bringing God to it, for being a member of his household and well known in the royal palace, it does not fear to be sent away.

Our holy guardian angel speaks in this way, and if you consider carefully, you will see that an ardent sigh may be said to obtain its object rather by actions than by words.

CHAPTER V

HOW TO CALL ON GOD

In order to call on God in this manner by sighs, you must keep in mind his mercies and excellencies : whenever you desire anything you must at once remember that it is to be found better in

[1] Ps. xxxvi, 4. [2] Hab. ii, 3.

[3] ' O compassionate and tender sovereign of my soul, who dost say : " If any one thirst, let him come to me, and I will give him to drink ! " O life, who givest life to all, refuse not this most delicious water, promised by thee to all who long for it ! Behold, I long for it, O Lord ; I ask it, I come to thee. Hide not this water from me : thou knowest how I need it, since it is the only cure for a soul wounded by thee. . . . O living waters, springing from the wounds of my God ! How abundantly you ever flow to sustain us. Safely indeed will he who drinks eagerly of this divine draught traverse the dangers of this wretched life ' (*Exclam.* ix. Expressions of this longing for God abound in S. Teresa's writings).

[4] Ps. xli, 1.

God, therefore should be more longed for and loved in him. Accustom yourself to say: 'O God of my heart and my affections,' or some words of the same kind; if used often, though at first they may appear unreal, in time you will find that they truly rise from your heart.

Those who practise recollection should notice that if they steadily persevere, though in the beginning they may not pay much attention to this calling to God by sighs, yet the time will come when they will find themselves in a spiritual state or age interiorly in which they will yearn beyond measure, with passionate and profound sighs, for something, they know not what.[1] For the recollected at times desire with great anxiety, though they know not what it is that draws these deep sighs from their heart. Their soul is astonished at it and cannot tell who it is that arouses in them these keen longings for some unknown object. It is a great blessing and joy for the soul that knows it was careless but a short while ago, to be aroused and given fresh life by a sigh from the depths of the heart that makes it exclaim: 'Jesus, joy of my heart!'

These or similar exclamations are uttered by those who have the grace to call on God by sighs—though we might rather say that God is calling them to follow him to the desert of contemplation. The heart often sighs to be alone with him, though at times when in company with others, it tries to hide its feelings. The best remedy for this longing is perseverance in prayer by which the soul finds God and is somewhat satisfied, its sighs being changed into a joy and content that words cannot express.

No doubt these desires, though they come from the heart, do not originate from it chiefly, but are secretly inspired by God who moves it, as he can do. He whom it so eagerly desires moves it, and the heart itself cannot tell what it is that it craves. It knows that it desires some good, but not what that good is, nor does it fully understand to whom its sighs are addressed. Withdrawn and set apart from earthly cares by recollection, it draws nearer to God who prompts its longings and touches it with his grace; yet the soul, not understanding, says as that same Lord said, feeling the strength of the desire that goes forth from it: 'Who hath touched me?' There is no doubt that the heart is longing for him who inspires it with these desires, and as they did

[1] 'The soul sees distinctly that it seeks nothing but God, yet its love dwells not on any attribute of him in particular; it seeks him as he is and knows not what it seeks. I say that it knows not, because the imagination forms no representation whatever' (*Life*, ch. xx, 15).

not enter it through the senses, it only knows, and that not until later on, that its yearning is for God because it sees that the whole world will not suffice to satisfy this craving.

Those who have never felt such longing must not suppose it to be impossible, for sometimes a man is hungry yet cannot tell which food he would prefer, and women with child often feel likings or dislikings for they know not what. We may say of such people what is said of a foolish man who makes some wise remark : ' He said more than he meant,' or, ' He told more than he knew.' Souls with such great desires long for more than they know, for their mind cannot understand their cravings. The Apostle writes of this : ' The Spirit also helpeth our infirmity. For we know not what we should pray for as we ought : but the Spirit himself asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.'[1]

But he who scrutinizes hearts knows what the Spirit desires, for he asks what God wills for holy souls, and we know that ' all things work together for good for those who love God.'

The Apostle gives a full explanation in these words concerning this mystery. You must know that this desire is too sublime for our powers to produce, but shows that the Holy Ghost is helping the infirmity of our heart's action, so that by his aid this excessive desire, which is true prayer, may go forth. Since we know not what we ought to ask of God in this prayer that consists in desire, the Holy Spirit asketh for us by means of the love he produces in us. The gloss says of this : ' The charity set in us by the Holy Ghost groans and prays : he who gave it cannot close his ears against it.'

The Apostle also says that the Holy Spirit, by means of his grace within us, ' asks and prays with unspeakable groanings.' ' Unspeakable ' because, as we said before, even the recollected do not understand or fully realize what is the object of this desire implanted within them. The gloss comments : ' How can a person explain what he desires, when he does not know ? But he is not altogether ignorant of it, or he could not long for it, nor, if he had found it, would he search for it with sighs.'

The Apostle says that God, who sees all hearts, knows what our spirit longs for, which is God himself : a desire founded on love for God which draws all things to what is right. I explain this because some simple persons think, when they feel this eager desire, that they are going out of their mind, while really they are of the same mind as Christ.

S. Augustine says that as the body has its movement in space, so the soul moves by desires ; and as movement takes its denomi-

[1] Rom. viii, 26.

nation from its terminus, it is evident that a desire which tends to God should be called divine. Bodily movement, though termed according to its goal, which gives name to the intervening mediums, does not on that account lose its own character and therefore may be considered in this respect, e.g. as successive, inasmuch as it affects one part after the other. However, as the sigh of the heart is instantaneous (not of one part after the other, for the soul has no parts as it is spiritual), it follows that the soul is then with God, as S. Augustine teaches ; that it moves by desire as the body moves by space. Hence the same Doctor of the Church declares elsewhere that the soul is more in the thing it loves than in the body it animates, for the higher and more spiritual part of the soul goes to what it loves, while the lower and inferior portion remains in the place where it performs its minor operation of giving corporeal life.

It may be said that no one can sigh to our Lord God who has not a great love for him, as such an exclamation comes from an abundant love which is presupposed. For those who eat him hunger for him, and without God, man can hardly desire him, since, according to S. Gregory, there is no doubt that those who long for him possess him.[1] So that to sigh for God, we must love him. If you have this love, you need not tell me that you sigh for him, for he will move the heart to do so. There is this difference between proficients who taste him and the perfect. The former always taste him with desire of greater sweetness, and the latter enjoy him without cloying yet without desire, for filled with every good, they have all they want. To the proficient is given in part that which the perfect enjoy fully and entirely. Therefore when the soul tastes God in this vale of tears, it sighs for the rest without waiting to consult other people.

I know well that there is no need to bid those who possess God to sigh after him ; yet there is need to make known to them the excellence of this practice to which God incites the soul wherein he dwells ; for no fire is more purifying, no polish gives greater beauty, no knife cuts more sharply, nor does any ship more swiftly reach the port it craves. Therefore those who possess God must not neglect to sigh to him in order to become more holy. And even though you do not long for God, let your soul desire his justifications and draw him to you with sighs, however feeble. For God is like a delicate lathe which does not set its dainty teeth on anything that has not first been shaped with an adze. Hence he does not infuse faith, which is a theological virtue, except in those

[1] ' Thou couldst not long for him, hadst thou not found him.'

who have some faith of their own. Though it is of little value compared with the faith he gives, yet some faith is always required even in infants who are baptized in that of their fathers. Therefore you must practise sighing to God, though it may be but tepidly, in order that he may perfect what you have begun. And if you have not made this beginning, you must beg him with sighs for it.[1]

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER DESIRE THAT CRIES TO GOD

THERE is another kind of desire by which some persons cry to God: not that he will console them here, but that he will withdraw them from this life and raise them to the kingdom of heaven. These sighs rise daily from the heart: 'Thy kingdom come, Lord; come, O Lord, to me or bid me rise to thee!' It is written of this appeal to God: 'The desire of the just is all good.'[2]

The reign of God or God himself is called 'all good' because it is the reward of the blessed, for to each of the just he says: 'I will show thee all good.'[3] It is termed 'all good' because in him there is no evil and outside him there is no good. Some of the righteous desire to be dissolved and be with Christ. This longing is called objectively 'all good,' not because in itself it is better than the rest, for it is difficult to judge which is the best, and there is for and against in each case, but all are good, and so good that any one who is lacking in all of them can hardly be called a good Christian.

The last desire of which we treat is engendered in the soul by one of two things; either from its having a knowledge of the evils of this world[4] or from its having begun to taste God's sweetness. I do not think that in either case the soul can cease crying to God

[1] In the *Camino* S. Teresa teaches her nuns how to practise recollection and intercourse with our Lord. (See chs. xxviii and xxix especially.) 'We are not forced to take wings to find God, but have only to seek solitude and find him within our souls. We need not be overwhelmed with confusion before so great a Guest, but, with utter humility, talk to him as to your Father; ask for what you want as from a father. . . . Address him sometimes as a Father or as a Brother, or again as a Master or as your Bridegroom: sometimes in one way, sometimes in another, for he will teach you what he wishes you to do.' Such souls 'resemble a man who goes by sea, and who if the weather is favourable, gets in a few days to the end of a voyage that would have taken far longer by land' (*Camino*, ch. xxviii). [2] Prov. xi, 23. [3] Exod. xxxiii, 19.

[4] 'O life, enemy of my joy, would that it were lawful to put an end to thee! . . . Woe is me that my sojourning is prolonged! All time is short in exchange for thine eternity, yet how long a day or even an hour

by its sighs either to liberate it from present ills or to satiate it with what he has begun to give it to taste. Such a one will exclaim with holy Job : ' Who will grant that my request may come : and that God may give me what I look for ? '[1] Later on he explains what he asked and hoped for : ' Who will grant me that I might know and find him, and come even to his throne ? '[2]

No doubt the just know God, for they adore what they know and they have found him by grace. But when they reach the royal throne of his glory, they will have another sort of knowledge, compared with which we know nothing now ; and God will be found in such sort that they will think they have found him anew, for they will lose the fear of losing him and will thus ' come to the throne of his glory,' saying : ' I have what I longed for.'

Those who long to be with Christ in order to escape from their trials cry, weeping : ' Woe is me, that my sojourning is prolonged ! '[3] ' Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee.'[4] Yet the soul that makes such a prayer does not feel satisfied, seeing that it desires heaven in order to avoid suffering, and not from the right motives : therefore it says within itself : ' My soul longeth and fainteth.'[5] It desires to go to God and calls on him with sighs, but faints because it sees that this is to avoid pain, and true lovers must wish to suffer[6] as much as to go to God, like S. Martin and S. Paul who were indifferent and left the choice to God, begging him to decide as he would for them, for they were ready for either.

There is also a desire to go to God proceeding from right reason aided by faith and other customary causes which combine to produce this longing in the soul. But without anything of the kind, the Lord imprints it in some hearts by a sort of heavenly gift in the soul[7] that remains there through good and bad fortune.

appears, laden with the risk and dread of offending thee ! When will that blessed day arrive when, absorbed in the infinite ocean of supreme Truth, thou wilt no longer possess the power or wish to sin, being freed from all misery and united to the life of thy God ? ' (*Exclam.* xvi).

[1] Job vi, 8. [2] Job xxiii, 3. [3] Ps. cix, 5.

[4] Ps. xxxvii, 10. [5] Ps. lxxxiii, 2.

[6] Speaking of souls in the highest state of prayer, S. Teresa says : ' Not only have they ceased to long for death, but they desire a long life and most heavy crosses, if such would bring ever so little honour to our Lord. Thus, if they knew for certain that immediately on quitting their bodies their souls would enjoy God, it would make no difference to them, nor do they think of the glory enjoyed by the saints and long to share it ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iii, 6).

[7] S. Teresa gives a vivid description of her desires for death caused by a trance and by the transverberation of her heart in the *Castle*, M. vi,

This desire may be known to be rather perfect and infused than sought for, as though the former longing ceases when its causes are removed, this never ceases, whatever happens.

He who craves to go to God to taste his sweetness no longer wants to do so if some small consolation is granted him. If the desire arises in order to escape from trials, it disappears when they are removed. But if the longing is infused or comes from pure love, it remains until it is fulfilled and the Lord mercifully extends the golden sceptre—the command to appear in his gracious presence. Therefore, summing up the teaching of this Letter of the Alphabet, I advise the praiseworthy and meritorious practice of preserving a lively memory of God and calling to him in the depth of your heart. As he wishes to enter it and its messenger of holy desire has been sent to him, he comes willingly at once.

ch. xi. She says : ' These longings, tears, sighs, violent and impetuous desires and strong feelings which seem to proceed from our vehement love are yet as nothing compared with what I am about to describe, and seem but a smouldering fire. . . . While the soul is thus inflamed with love, it often happens that, from a passing thought or spoken word of how death delays its coming, the heart receives, it knows not how or whence, a blow as from a fiery dart ' (see *Life*, ch. xxix). . . . ' The understanding realizes acutely what cause there is for grief in separation from God, and his Majesty now augments this sorrow by a vivid manifestation of himself.' It was after having experienced this state that the Saint wrote her well-known poem : ' I die because I do not die,' of which we give a verse :

Deliver me in mercy from this death
And grant, O God, the gift of life at last,
Nor let me linger in captivity
Enchained to earth with bonds and fetters fast.
I die with longing to behold thee near
And gain true life. Without thy presence dear
Behold I die because I do not die !

(*Minor Works of S. Teresa*, Poem 2.) Several of the Saint's poems relate to this subject. She speaks of it in the *Camino* (ch. xix), where she warns her daughters that it is always wrong to wish for these desires : ' It is solely through the grace of God that we reap any benefit from such a desire. We covet it beyond measure, and do all we can to augment our longings, so that sometimes people die of such emotions. What a blessed death ! Yet perhaps by living, one might have helped others to die with the desire of such a death. . . . I strongly advise any one who feels this excessive thirst to be very cautious, for this temptation is sure to occur. . . . Let us be careful not to yield to any strong impulse towards fomenting this longing, but gently put it aside by turning our thoughts to some other subject. . . . I do not mean that these longings should be stifled, but moderated.' At the end of her life, S. Teresa declares that if she were to make great efforts to wish to die, she could not (*Rel.* xi, 7 ; *Rel.* iv, 1 ; *Life*, ch. xx ; *Concep.* vii, 2).

TWELFTH TREATISE

SPEAKS OF SPIRITUAL RELISH, SAYING: 'NOT BY THE UNDERSTANDING BUT BY TASTING MUST YOU THINK OF OBTAINING REST.'[1]

CHAPTER I

CONTEMPLATION AND PRAYER MORE HELPFUL THAN LEARNING.

TWO wings were given to our soul whereby to fly to God and to the solitude of interior recollection, in which solitude, according to S. John, it receives from God food and provision of grace and has a place prepared by the hand of the Lord.

The two principal wings of our soul are the understanding and the will given to it, so that it may seek the repose found in the solitude of the heart provided by the hand of God with all that is needed to satisfy our desire, and made ready by his action, for our own would not suffice. These wings, S. John declares, are those of the eagle, whose flight and conversation are in heaven, for those who practise this mode of prayer are rather heavenly than of this world, and S. Paul's words: 'Our conversation is in heaven,'[2] apply to them. Yet there are people who expect and strive to attain to this repose of contemplation by using the left wing of the understanding alone, like a man rowing with one oar to reach the port of rest, or swimming with one arm to gain the shore. Our Letter of the Alphabet tells such persons that not with the understanding, which means by using the left wing, but by tasting, which is the right wing, may they hope to reach the longed-for repose.[3]

[1] N, twelfth Letter, is set forth in the Spanish by *No entiendo; mas gustando, pienses alcanzar reposo.* [2] Phil. iii, 20.

[3] 'Our Lady was not like some learned men who have not been led by God in this way of prayer and cannot understand the first principles of spirituality. They want to reduce everything to reason, measuring all matters by their own intellects, so that it seems as if they, with their knowledge, would be able to comprehend all the mysteries of God' (*Concep.* ch. vi, 8).

There is strong reason for believing that not by intellectual effort will entire and satisfying rest be found, though our mind may find and search for many and very sublime considerations. For after all, a fraction of that of which we are ignorant will exceed all our knowledge, and our intellect is a receptive and causative power of information and knowledge of all things that have been, are, and may be, in such a manner that our mind may be said to have as much power to understand as God has to act. Hence, in a certain way, our intellect is all things, for it can draw up in order knowledge and understanding of them all. So that as the active power of God of working outside himself never has nor ever will reach completion—that is, he will never do all he could —so the power of understanding in man while in this life never is, nor ever will be so complete that it is unable to learn more, which would be requisite to obtain repose. An example of this is found in matter, which is said to strive continually to dissolve one of its forms in order to take another. The reason is that matter is receptive of all forms, and can have them all, although not all at the same time ; and power, until reduced to its final act, cannot rest.

Since, as S. Bonaventure says, in order to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil many do not taste of the tree of life, you would do well to moderate an inordinate love of learning, for nothing more disturbs the heart, as the wise man says : ' I have given my heart to know prudence, and learning, and errors, and folly : and I have perceived that in these also there was labour, and vexation of spirit, because in much wisdom there is much indignation : and he that addeth knowledge, addeth also labour.'[1]

To be learned, a man must first be prudent in the matter ; and prudence is a very difficult thing to obtain, for on examination, you will find that study never gives the intellect what nature has denied.

Again, in order to be learned a man must know speculative and moral theology, for the first is of little use without the second, nor does the latter carry much authority without the former. He must also know what were the errors of the different heresies and the superstitions of the heathen to be found in the works of the orators and poets.

In these things, there is not only labour but vexation of spirit, as Solomon says. Mediocre theologians know this by experience, for they are continually thinking how they will say this or that ; they require the whole of their time to compose their laborious

[1] Eccles. i, 17, 18

sermons, and after having afflicted their spirit are so discontented that they should be rather pitied than envied.

Holy Scripture often counsels preachers of one thing which they practise little : not because they will not but because they cannot. They are strongly exhorted to make use of contemplation and prayer, and this is the last thing they practise, for they have enough work to do in writing a fine sermon, even if they do not feel dissatisfied and unhappy about it in the end. Oh what vexation of spirit it is when tears come to the eyes, grace to the heart, recollection to the soul, and sighs and sobs to the breast, to be obliged to set them all aside for the sake of study ! When others are celebrating the feasts and holy seasons with joy of soul, such a person is in the deepest affliction. His whole thoughts are centred on his sermon and whether he will preach as well as he wishes or no ; whether it will be worthy of the festival or not. In this way study robs him of all his attention and time, nor, as Job says, will it allow him to swallow down his spittle,[1] or rest, or make his confession at leisure as he wishes, or pray with devotion and quietude, or hear or say Mass as he should, or attend to his cell and person. What greater vexation of spirit could there be ? ' In much wisdom there is much indignation,' the wise man says.[2] When learned men find nothing that contents them and that is magnificent enough to suit their learning and presumption, no one must speak to them, for their sad and frowning faces show how indignant they feel. They are disgusted with the books, find fault with the authors, wish and search for fresh writings, read first one and then the other, become tired out and add one trouble after another, and are overwhelmed with books, laden with fetters, burdened with fear. The more wit and learning they have, the more books they say they require, as the stronger men are, the more arms they need. They do not consider that reading many books dissipates the soul, besides the labours, want of rest, and burden for the memory it causes, being a food that cannot satisfy the stomach and a varnish to disguise the want of knowledge in order to lead foolish people into believing that since they own so many books, they understand them.

Sometimes too many books are an obstacle to learning, as too large an army causes a confusion that hinders victory. Would to God that you had only one book and studied it well instead of turning from one to the other and mastering none, and hesitating between them as though they were different roads and you did not know which to take. Remember, many

[1] Job vii, 19. [2] Eccles. i, 18.

volumes may make a library of your cell but not of your memory, for it only retains their titles, whereas one book might have made a library of your mind and been more useful. But what shall we say of keeping many books when it troubles the conscience of a man who has made a vow of poverty, who wanders about like a dog trying to get rid of the arrow that pierces him? He asks advice of a number of people as though he could not judge of the matter himself, for he who is learned wants others to allow him what his conscience denies.

This will show how little peace of mind those hold who study nothing but learning; they are like Tantalus parched with thirst in the midst of the river.

CHAPTER II

THE KNOWLEDGE FITTING FOR A RELIGIOUS

A GOOD religious must first seek goodness and devout discipline, and then learning,[1] and must take care that the latter does not choke devotion like weeds that grow among wheat. An ignorant religious is monstrous in religion, for the servant of God must be discreet and judicious; but there are two ways of learning: the one by prayer, the other by study.

The first is very fitting for religious, for, as Gerson says, religious Orders are schools of affection and love. But the religious who is to become a priest and confessor ought to ask his superiors to allow him the studies required to render him competent for the office. Some religious with little knowledge undertake a charge they do not know how to perform and think their ignorance quite excusable. As S. John Climacus says, obedience does not lay such duties upon them unless their superiors believe they are capable of undertaking them. If they are not, religious are bound to refuse the charge. If, after that, it is laid upon them, they must be extremely careful in performing their duty, since it was imposed on them under such conditions. But if you never read a book or study or consult others as to how to perform your office, do you think that your superior will have to bear the brunt of your mistakes?

Setting this aside, if you wish to attain to the spiritual wisdom of which we speak, you must not sleep much or give way to any vice, either in eating, drinking, or care for fine clothes; you must

[1] S. Teresa laid down a law that a certain list of books chosen by her should be kept in every convent for the use of the nuns.

not seek to excuse yourself from your duties nor give way to sloth, nor lay the blame on your natural stupidity. But you must keep vigil, think, desire, be eager, resolute, raise up your heart, incite your soul to be strong, avoid tepidity in all things, and abstain from what you might lawfully use. Devote yourself to the work of prayer, for there is nothing so burdensome that attention and care will not render easy, so hard that they will not soften it, so blunt that they will not sharpen it; none too slothful to be aroused, too buried or shut up to be brought out, or too drowsy to be awakened by them. Set spurs to your soul as though it were a lazy horse. You cannot make your body an excuse; it rather furnishes you with the means of carrying out this work. Some people give up a thing that they cannot have directly they want it; do not resemble them but take courage: effort will support you: the thing that gives most resistance costs the most force, and is prized most highly. Few people gain what is rare, and it is rare, praiseworthy, and most excellent and well-pleasing to God to be one of those few.

You have not lost all hope of making progress in this prayer if you feel an inability for it: rather you have discovered the need of making more strenuous effort. For as it is a greater glory in the sight of God and man to become highly virtuous through one's own endeavours than to be so virtuous by nature, it is better to perform a good deed deliberately than by chance. Do not long to study unnecessary matters, for it is a greater and a safer thing to be renowned for virtue than for learning.

Lest you should think that those are ignorant who devote themselves to prayer, you must know that God himself teaches them in various ways. The way that is least usual and most to be suspected as to its divine origin is by a voice outside the person who hears it.[1] Although not heard distinctly, the sound and

[1] Speaking of locutions, S. Teresa says: 'God arouses the soul by means of words addressed to it in many different ways; sometimes they appear to come from without; at other times from the inner depths of the soul, or again, from its superior part; while other speeches are so exterior as to be heard by the ears like a real voice. At times, indeed very often, this may only be a fancy. . . . There is need for caution at first. Any kind may come either from God, the devil, or the imaginations.' She declares that the most certain sign of their being divine is the power and authority they carry with them; the second sign is the calm and peaceful and devout recollection that results; the third that they are never forgotten, the fourth humility and fervour. 'God speaks to the soul in another way by a certain intellectual vision. . . . It takes place far within the innermost depths of the soul, which seems to hear distinctly in a most mysterious manner, with its spiritual hearing, the

manner show that it comes from a spirit, not a human being, for it sounds very thin and seems to be nothing but the faint utterance of a voice. It administers advice and the hearer enjoys sweet melodies and is roused from sleep to give praise to God. When you are bidden to perform some action by this voice, do not believe it lightly and without much consultation.

God teaches his own in a second manner by which they hear things with the ear of the heart with great certainty. Sometimes such speeches come from the heart: not that the hearer himself forms them, but someone appears to open the door of the heart to allow them to come forth. Occasionally the soul is so dilated by sweetness and peace that it seems to see and know the whole world and the services rendered to God in it, and to rejoice over them. Again the heart's power of sight appears to be lengthened so that it may view the offences committed against the Lord and mourn over them, and it beholds the future and things far off. Though true things may be shown you in this way, you must fear, for the mind acts with such subtlety that it imagines what it desires, and you could not tell its revelations from an angel's.

God teaches those who come to him in another manner without interior speech or action. It takes place with such secrecy that the soul itself does not know it at the time, nor until it sees itself growing in discretion, and in knowledge of how to direct its own and other people's affairs prudently. It also understands many things in Holy Scripture that it could not comprehend before, though it knows not whence this knowledge came. I think that God treats these people as we treat thrushes and birds that we teach; but they know they are learning. This way of learning is excellent if free from presumption and combined with faith and right reason. However, there is danger in great unrestraint, for it is hateful that a man should concern himself with what is beyond him.

We will speak in the next chapter about dreams. You must know that the Lord has other ways of teaching his own. One mode is that while they are absent, something is done that would please them or that they wish for, and they feel joy in their heart

words spoken to it by our Lord himself.' Certain persons, while absorbed in the prayer of quiet and in spiritual slumber, 'as if asleep—as indeed at times they really are—as in a sort of dream, fancy they are spoken to or see things they imagine come from God. . . . We should consult some confessor who is both learned and a servant of God before attempting or thinking of acting on these locutions' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. iii; also *Life*, ch. xxv, 4 *seq.*).

and soul at the time, but are surprised, as they do not understand the reason why. Afterwards, when they learn what happened, they think that God meant to manifest it to them by signs.[1]

There seems no deception about this, for the fact explains their feeling, but the devil is so crafty that hardly anything is safe. But all things will be safe if you turn to God and do not concern yourself with what is beyond you. You turn to him in such cases when you use them as a means for loving him, and say to him by your action each time : ' I will take hold of thee : and I will not let thee go, until I bring thee into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that bore me :[2] there thou shalt teach me, and I will give thee a cup of spiced wine, and the new wine of my pomegranates.'[3] The soul captures and takes hold of God with bonds of love, for God knows not how to resist love, but at once yields himself as vanquished, like the heron when the falcon is let loose to capture it.[4] Thus God, the prey of love, is brought by the soul not only to its mother's house, but ' into the bed of her ' that bore it.

' The mother of the soul,' by which it gains its merit, is the will : the house is the heart. Not only is God led there but to the bed which is the recollection of which we treat. God rejoices in this chamber, closing the shutters of the senses. Here he teaches the soul many things by experience, as the bride declares. To send him to sleep and keep him with her, she gives him a cup of spiced wine with many ingredients, concentrating all her desires

[1] Speaking of the prayer of quiet, S. Teresa writes : ' Great truths are here imparted to the mind which, though too dazzled to realize what the light is, now perceives the vanity of the world. The soul does not see the good Master who teaches it, although clearly conscious of his presence. Still, it is left with greatly increased knowledge and such growth and strength of virtue that it cannot recognize its former self ' (*Concep.* ch. iv, 3).

[2] The Spanish gives : *Arrebatarte he, y llevarte he á la casa de mi madre y á la cama de la que me engendró.* ' I will take hold of thee, and bring thee into my mother's house, into the bed of her who gave me birth.'

[3] Cant. iii, 4, and viii, 2.

[4] This mystic union of love divine
The bond whereby alone my soul doth live
Hath made of God my Captive—but to me
True liberty of heart the while doth give.
And yet my spirit is so sorely pained
At gazing on my Lord by me enchained
That still I die because I do not die.

(*Minor Works of S. Teresa*, Poem 2.)

on God alone. And she tenders him new wine of her pomegranates—the fervour from the very depths of her heart, coloured with charity and covered with purity.

Then 'taste and see,' brother, 'how sweet the Lord is,' for when the soul gives him her affection and desires to drink, it is she who is taken captive and inebriated with the new wine, which is ardent love. That is why in the chapter of the Canticles quoted above, the Lord, having drunk this wine, adjures them 'not to make the beloved to awake, till she please,' leaving it to her choice, for God is always the last to leave off loving. The bride says that he has put his left hand under her head, exalting the higher part of the soul above all creatures and that his right hand embraces her, for she sees herself encircled by the eternity that she contemplates.

CHAPTER III

AGAINST THE OPPONENTS OF SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION[1]

THIS Letter of the Alphabet should be carefully studied by those who dare to maintain that we must not seek for divine consolations or relish for spiritual things. The reason they give is founded on their suspicion that people thus consoled love God for the sweetness he gives and not for himself.

This opinion, forged on the devil's anvil, falsifies and depreciates the devout intentions of God's servants and shows Satan's partisans in all their doings in the worst possible light.

These opponents also say that we stop half-way and hinder ourselves from reaching the end: this ought to put them to shame, for they have not started. Their opinion does not deserve respect, for they set spiritual and earthly consolation on the same plane. They say that both are self-love, but I do not know whether they

[1] S. Teresa calls consolations 'the prayer of quiet.' She describes how this favour dilates the heart and benefits the soul in an inexplicable manner. She says: 'You are longing, my daughters, to enter this state of prayer, and you are right, for the soul cannot understand the values of the graces there bestowed by God upon it, nor the love which draws him ever closer to it: we should certainly desire to learn how to obtain this favour. . . . When his Majesty wishes the mind to cease from working he employs it in another manner, giving it a light and knowledge far above any obtainable by its own efforts and absorbing it entirely into himself. . . . The soul's virtues are increased and it will not cease to advance in perfection, unless it turns back and offends God' (*Castle*, M. iv, chs. ii and iii). Throughout the *Castle*, the teaching is directed to showing souls how to strive and prepare for supernatural prayer and consolations, which occupies a large place in the *Life* and *Camino*. (See *Castle*, M. iii, ch. ii; *Camino*, ch. xxv, 1; xxx, 6; xxxi, p.t., etc.)

look for any other meaning of consolation than such as a man feels when he eats, which he must needs do to preserve his health, and unless the food tastes well, it does him little good. I do not know what name they give to wedded faith if they call spiritual consolation self-love, which, as S. Augustine teaches, is the root of all evil since, but for that, no one would commit sin. Spiritual consolation and interior sweetness are a delight and refreshment enjoyed by the devout, each in his own manner. To say that this consolation ought neither to be sought nor consented to when the Lord gives it may be either diabolic or human, but in any case the term ' consolation ' is taken in a wrong meaning. The devil seeks false reasons for withdrawing men from good practices, for when he sees they have no spiritual consolations he can more easily attract them to bodily pleasures, knowing that, as S. Gregory says, the soul cannot remain long without being consoled. The more that of the body increases, the more the spiritual decreases, according to the words of that Doctor of the Church : ' Human consolations are sweet, but not to all—only to those who have not tasted heavenly ones ; for the less a man understands eternal, the more does he delight in temporal joys.' According to this, it seems to me that the devil skilfully tries to withdraw you from spiritual consolation (that is, the bread of the soul) in order that, finding yourself in the desert dying with hunger, as David found the servant of the Amalecite, he may draw you the more easily from strict virtue.

This objection to our enjoying consolation may also be human, for devout persons often lose it by their own fault through having accepted comfort from some other source, which suffices to deprive them of the former, as S. Bernard says. In order to assuage the sorrow of their soul, that is as dry as a land without water, they say to themselves that perfection does not consist in being consoled, for this is self-love, but in suffering—as if they had as much fortitude as Christ—and even he complained on the cross of being deprived of the divine consolation he was accustomed to feel in the sensitive part of his nature. Nor did the Apostles dare to leave Jerusalem until they had received the Holy Ghost the Comforter.

CHAPTER IV

SHOWS IN WHAT WAYS WE MAY DESIRE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION

THERE are three principal ways in which spiritual consolation can be desired. The first is to wish for it with hatred for God, as

those in hell desire it and as we long for the goods of our enemies. The second is to aspire after it on its own account without directing it to any other object, simply for the pleasure of enjoying it, as we should wish for hot-house grapes or any other fresh fruit to make a new man of ourselves, as the saying goes. The third reason for desiring it is to arouse our love, that we may love God more tenderly and practise all sanctity, having been incited to this by the enjoyment of its fruit.

There are many other ways of desiring too numerous to mention, for each soul is free to wish for it according to its own choice, as the manna had whatever flavour the eater wanted. Do not be shocked at men's longing for spiritual consolation from a wrong motive, for those competent to judge tell us that there is nothing which cannot be used wrongly. Our free-will is so wicked that we can even make a bad use of the theological virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost, as Simon Magus designed to do. As for the self-love men say you feel in spiritual consolation, they might suspect that you feel that regarding any other virtue and even in martyrdom.

However, setting apart all false argument used by the devil personally or by means of others, let us examine the two ways in which we may desire consolation. The first is a desire not relating to anything else. The second is a wish for it in order to serve God more and better by means of it. As it is proved that both these ways are good, the field is clear. I do not believe that any sensible man wishes for spiritual consolation solely to see what it is like, without any reference to God. But, admitting for the sake of argument that there is one who does, I do not see what harm could come of his desire, and there are many benefits that it might bring to him.

If a man wished to taste the cone of a cedar tree, with the doctor's permission, he would not sin mortally or venially ; still less would he sin by wanting to taste spiritual consolations which are more desirable. Indeed, the cedar cone can be procured by unlawful means : but spiritual joys cannot be obtained without virtue and devotion, as S. Bernard writes : ' David said he had learnt by God's commandments, to teach you that the delight of contemplation can in no way be deserved except by obedience to the divine commands.'

If anyone with the above intention were to taste such consolation, his desire to taste more would increase, and he would be constrained to become more pure and wash himself with tears so that his soul might deserve, like another Esther, to be raised to

the royal chamber. No doubt that through tasting he would love. 'Blessed are those that weep, for they shall be consoled.' 'What else,' says S. Bernard, 'is this consolation but great devotion proceeding from the hope of pardon, a most sweet delight in what is good, and a foretaste, though but a slight one, of the divine sweetness with which the pitiful Lord sometimes refreshes the afflicted soul?' But this foretaste is nothing but a challenge to the desire and a provocation of love, for it is written: 'Those who eat me shall hunger for me.' Thus far S. Bernard.

Would to God that all sinners might change their mind, and for their greater advantage seek for spiritual instead of earthly consolation; few of them would perish everlastingly, for this sweet relish, if they obtained it, would end by converting them to God. And even if certain devout persons' intention is not perfectly pure when they draw near to God, for they desire to taste him for their own sake, yet they ought not to relinquish this suavity even though it is enveloped in self-love. This is Gerson's opinion: 'Therefore it is better to take one's delight in God, though perhaps it may be less pure than is right, than to partake of the delights of the world, the devil, and the flesh.' He writes this as a vindication against the calumnies of opponents; he bids us draw near God in any case, for as we cannot live without some pleasure, it is better to seek it in God than in the world, though our intention may not be so pure as it ought to be. It is said not to be altogether pure when we only seek to taste for our own sake him who is worthy to be sought with all earnestness for his own sake alone. If we examine carefully, we shall find united in him all that leads us to seek whatever else is good and delightful, for he is very rich and delightful. Of his riches it is said: 'There is great delight in her (wisdom's) friendship, and inexhaustible riches in the works of her hands.'[1] The gloss comments on this: 'The greater the love, the sweeter does it find the beloved. It must be noticed that the hands of this spiritual delight are not idle, nor is there only one hand—there are many, and so industrious are they in performing numerous good works that they are said to contain "inexhaustible riches."'

I do not think that any human tongue could tell how useful this sacred relish for God may be to us; for it is said of this spiritual consolation: 'Godliness is profitable to all things.'[2] Godliness, according to a gloss on Ezechiel vii, is reverence or obeisance paid to God, and none render it more fully than those who taste him, as they know by experience how he should be

[1] Wisdom viii, 18 [2] 1 Tim. iv, 8.

honoured, for this sweetness is useful in every way. Well does S. Augustine say: 'While we are in this body as pilgrims to God, at least let us taste how sweet is the Lord who gives us the pledge of the Spirit by which we relish his sweet name.'

Although it has been said that we may laudably seek spiritual consolation solely for its own sake, let no one imagine that the devout end with this; for Christ, the zealous Lover of our souls, directly he gives this consolation teaches them that they must pass onwards to the third kind of desire of which we began to speak—desire for consolation in order to serve and love him more and better. That our Lord teaches this to the soul immediately seems figured in the Gospel,[1] where he blames those who sought him because of the pleasant food he had given them. He showed them that they must seek him for his own sake alone, which is more worthy of him than aiming at sweetness, and he gives more sublime sustenance to those who seek him with the highest motive than to one who longs for what is sweet rather than for God, as he who goes to the fountain-head tastes the water better than he who drinks from the stream that flows from it. So that the more purely a man seeks God, the greater the spiritual sweetness he tastes, given him by that same Lord. S. Gregory says of this: 'The contemplative life is better than the active, because the latter toils in the labour of this present life, while the other tastes with an interior relish of the joy that is to come.'

Then let us seek the Lord with his consolations as do the just, not separating him from his consolation, though the devil may warn us against it, but as we believe him to be God and man, so let us search for him as both God and sweetness. For as his humanity is the way by which to go to God, so his sweetness incites and spurs us on, as S. Bernard says: 'If on account of his sweetness Holy Scripture calls the Son of God a honeycomb, I do not know why we should not seek him with his honey.'

CHAPTER V

HOW WE OUGHT TO DESIRE GOD WITH ALL HIS EXCELLENCES

IT is a great want of love to make these distinctions: if love were very fervent, it would not linger here, but with all its heart would love its Lord God in his entirety without discriminations that divert the force of love and fetter it with distinctions unnecessary

[1] S. John vi.

for true lovers, who, with a vehement impulse of love, go straight to God and to all that he contains. S. Gregory says on this point: 'The soul that is united by love to the invisible Bridegroom receives no consolation from this world, but with its whole inmost being sighs for the Beloved, is vehement, anxious, weary, and contemptuous of the welfare of the body in order that it may be transpierced with the wound of love.'

S. Gregory raises no questions here to trouble the simple, devout soul, which he declares is united to the Bridegroom by love and sighs out of love for his sweetness, because, as S. Bonaventure says, the sustenance of consolation nourishes those whom love renders fervent. As no one delights in what he does not love, it is impossible, according to the law of nature, that he should not delight in what he loves, and this delight is evidence that he has attained, or partially attained, to what he loves. For until then he suffers: afterwards he rejoices in the taste of the divine sweetness which is, as it were, the fruit of the past, because spiritual consolation is the fruit of exterior penances and austerities. S. Bernard says of this that men witness our painful crosses but not the consolations that cheer us.

Let no one believe that he loves God unless he longs to taste these, for the fruit of love is the relish of what is loved, and the more in proportion to the strength of the love. Richard speaking of joyful love says: 'Love is a sweetness of interior taste, and the more ardent the love, the more sweetness does it taste, and love is the enjoyment of hope.'

From what has been said, you may conclude the truth of the advice given in this Letter of the Alphabet, which says that there is little repose and happiness to be found in acuteness of mind, however keen the human intellect may be. Never imagine that you will obtain peace except by tasting that which you know, as S. Augustine desired when he prayed: 'I beseech thee, O Lord, to make me taste by love that which I taste by understanding, that I may perceive by affection that which I perceive by the intellect.'

S. Bernard bears evidence in himself of how we ought to repose in spiritual consolation when he says: 'I longed that a vital fluid should be infused into all the veins and the very marrow of my soul, so that it should be detached from all other affections and know only this.'

The same Saint shows how vigilantly we must seek for this taste of God. He says: 'Think what it was that during your life-time you have loved most ardently and desired most eagerly;

what gave you the greatest joy and delighted you more profoundly than anything else: then consider whether you feel the same violent affection and abundance of delight when you rise to a desire for the supreme Lover and when you repose in his love. If the spur of intimate love penetrates your soul less deeply in these divine affections, and this tenderness arouses you less forcibly than did your old affections, you ought to doubt whether the supreme Lover has even yet taken possession of the inner heart of your love.'

These words should make you fear, when you do not feel your wonted consolation and tenderness of heart, that it is through your own fault: you ought to think that you have less love for God or have in some way served him negligently, and that he makes it known to you by depriving you of the sweetness that you used to enjoy. And though Gerson gives fifteen reasons for God's withdrawing from us the sweetness of devotion, I think the chief one is our own faultiness and tepidity. S. Bernard agrees with this. He says: 'Let it be a certain sign to you, O soul, whoever you may be, that you have less love for your Beloved, or that he loves you less, if you are not still called to those high transports, or that you do not deserve to follow him who calls you. Cast off, then, all negligence and seek spiritual consolation, for that will be a most certain sign to show whether you are worthy of God's hatred or love.' S. Bernard says that he knew of the presence of the Eternal Word by the movement of his heart which made him conjecture that God had entered his soul.

The most plausible reason offered by opponents of this doctrine is that God is reserving this consolation for them in heaven, and that while they live in this world, they wish for nothing but trials. Perhaps they wish to go to God at their own cost, thinking that they can bear spiritual trials without any consolation, and that the wheels of their chariot do not require to be oiled with a drop of it.

Setting aside the presumption upon which such an opinion is based, they seem to think wrongly of our Lord who is the Father of mercy and God of all consolation, for they appear to suppose that God will subtract from them in heaven what he has given on earth. This is the opposite of his words: 'You shall receive in this world a hundredfold and in the world to come life everlasting.' Our Lord here speaks to all believers, promising them two rewards: in this world up to the limit of a hundred, and in the next unlimited eternal life.

If our Lord wishes to give you both in this world and the next

a full recompense, why are you so mean as to close your hand, refusing to receive the proof of his munificence? Do you wish him to keep the hundred for you in heaven as though his favours would be wanting there? You seem hard of belief if you think that the mercies you receive on earth will be deducted from the sum due to you there. This law applies only to the wicked who receive good things in this life and make bad use of them, like the rich miser. The reverse will be the case with the just, because for having received much grace here and used it well, they will be repaid with great glory. And there, to do them honour, mention of the grace bestowed on them here will be made to each one separately: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.'[1]

Our Lord calls the favours he grants us here 'few,' as they are if compared with those bestowed in heaven. Therefore speaking to the righteous while they dwell in this world, he says that divine joy is not in them because it is limited, but that when he raises them to heaven, they will enter into the immense joy of their Lord, as fish enter the ocean. Notice this: you will enter more deeply into this joy in heaven in proportion to your entrance into it while you are on earth, for 'to him that hath shall be given,' and the more joy you had, the more you will receive. Therefore you should receive much consolation here and make good use of it, for as S. John says: 'Of his fulness we all have received, and grace for grace.'[2]

We have now shown that this objection, which seemed to be valid, proves to be the very reverse. You must not suppose that it is weakened by the answer that spiritual consolation is rather a reward than a merit, for although this may be so, yet this temporal reward may help us the better to merit the reward that is eternal.

To his labourers our Lord gives a penny and their food: the penny is everlasting life and the food is the hundredfold of spiritual consolation bestowed in exchange for the worldly pleasures they have left; for he knows that the labourer is worthy of his hire. It is the bread of consolation that he taught us to ask for each day. After he had fasted he felt hunger, so that we too might feel it and not presume to pass through life without this food of consolation that he gives ungrudgingly, adding sweetness to it. The water turns to wine at the end of the feast to incite our appetite for more, and he sets himself under the appearance of bread and

[1] S. Matt. xxv, 21. [2] S. John i, 16.

wine to teach us how he longs to inebriate us at the breasts of his consolation.[1]

CHAPTER VI

OF THE EXCELLENCE OF SPIRITUAL SWEETNESS

SPIRITUAL sweetness is so excellent that I think it would be almost impossible for anyone who has experienced it not to praise it. Its conditions are known to be contrary to those of earthly food, of which if a man has eaten heartily, we know he is not hungry, but the reverse is the case if he has tasted divine things, for he hungers to taste and enjoy more of them. He opens the eyes of his soul to see and his heart to receive, sharpens his understanding to learn, and the deeper he finds the water is, the farther does he plunge into the sea. S. Bernard says of this: 'The more you delight in the contemplation of heavenly matters and wonder at them while enjoying them, the more willingly you dwell on them and search diligently into them, the more profoundly will you be enlightened. You will always wonder at what delights you, for nowhere does there exist more abundance of what is marvellous, nor a delight that renders us greater service.'

I have not sought to make distinctions between the various

[1] S. Teresa looked upon dryness as a necessary discipline for the soul, enabling it to serve God at its own cost. 'Remember,' she writes, 'it is of the greatest importance—the sole aim of one beginning to practise prayer should be to endure trials, and to resolve and strive to the utmost of her power to conform her own will to the will of God' (*Castle*, ii, ch. i, 15). 'It is much to be observed, and I say so because I know by experience, that the soul which begins to walk in the way of mental prayer with resolution, and is determined not to care much, neither to rejoice nor grieve, whether sweetness or tenderness fail it, or our Lord grants them, has already travelled a great part of the road. Let that soul then have no fear that it is going back, though it may often stumble, for the building is begun on a firm foundation. It is certain that the love of God does not consist in tears, nor in this sweetness and tenderness that we for the most part desire, and with which we console ourselves, but rather in serving him in justice, fortitude, and humility' (*Life*, ch. xi, 20). In a letter to her brother Lorenzo de Cepeda, dated February 27, 1577, S. Teresa writes: 'The fact is, I have been hoping for some time that you would suffer from dryness, so I was glad when I read your letter, though yours does not deserve the name of aridity. Believe me, it is a good thing in many ways.' On August 7, 1570, the Saint wrote to her niece Teresita: 'The dryness from which you suffer seems to prove that our Lord considers you a strong soul and is testing you to see whether you will love him as well in aridity as in spiritual sweetness. I consider that God is showing you a great favour. Do not be unhappy about it; perfection does not consist in feelings but in virtue.'

kinds of spiritual sweetness, since those who condemn them do not distinguish them; also because I do so later on. For the present I will only apply to them the words of S. Bernard: 'If anyone ignores that consolation is necessary, it is only because the grace of God is lacking in his case.'

I have read books that do not speak well of spiritual consolation, regarding it with exaggerated fears that have little foundation and blaming the feelings of devotion that are praised by the saints. I believe that this is because the authors have not tasted how sweet the Lord is, for, as Gerson says, these feelings can only be understood by those who have shared in them. 'Thinking of the Lord in goodness' and seeking him in simplicity of heart, we should at once perceive the things of the spirit and should taste Jesus Christ within us. Our soul would delight in plenitude of consolation, and as we delighted in God, he would give us the desire of our heart, for he says that his delights are to be with the children of men in order to make them delight in him.

The undevout say that the recollected overrate the consolations they feel, but offer no proof of this, which is but an idea of their own. They think, since they value so highly one day's fast they keep, that others should do the same, for they dearly prize their own devotion. The recollected have more reason for doing this, because, according to Gerson, to feel devotion is a great sign of love for God, and surpasses fasting, good as the latter may be. However, neither the one sign nor the other is certain. Therefore, remaining in hidden solitude let us think of the Lord in goodness and trust in him alone, and be humble, looking upon ourselves as useless servants.

If you delight in God, your soul possesses the best possible sign of the supreme love of God, therefore let no one frighten you by saying that it is self-love. Even if people tell you that the devil may be hidden under it, answer that he could hide himself behind the church door too, but that need not prevent your entering, for you will be safe if you make the sign of the cross. And you will be as safe, if you make due examination of these consolations, for as it is said, 'To the pure, all things are pure,' so that if the devil counterfeited every possible consolation in your soul, unless you gave way to pride or disobeyed the divine commandments he would harm himself and you would always be the gainer.[1]

[1] Satan can do little or no harm if the soul directs to God the joy and sweetness it feels. If it fixes the thoughts and desires on him, the devil can gain nothing whatever—on the contrary, by God's permission he will lose

CHAPTER VII

HOW MUCH BETTER IT IS TO HAVE SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION THAN TO BE WITHOUT IT

A CERTAIN theologian says that an undevout man suffering from aridity is in a safer state than a devout one. I do not believe it, for other things being equal with the exception that one of them feels devotion and the other, through no fault of his own, lacks it, I would rather be the devout man, and I should consider that I was better off, since I should have all that he had and a great deal more. For it is no small thing to possess devotion or spiritual consolation as the saints we quote prayed for it so earnestly. One of them says that any work performed without devotion is, as it were, dead, for as Hugh[1] declares, an action wanting in devotion is like a body without a soul.

Besides this, devotion is like a fire that makes the incense of prayer give out its perfume and rise to God.

Again, as S. Augustine says, devotion is the faithful messenger that speaks to God and presents to him our heart's petition. The dry soul is in a parched land and should lament it, but the devout soul is planted near the flowing waters : the former hungers, the latter has its daily bread ; the first has a lamp, but the second has oil as well.

The first has his guitar in tune to play with the ancients of the Apocalypse, while the second is not thus prepared, for his heart is not in harmony but indevout and disinclined : the one has something to offer God, but the soul of the other is very languid. As this is the place in which to state in detail the advantages of devotion and spiritual joy, you must know that it illumines the understanding like an unction that imparts knowledge ; it kindles our love of what is good, for he who tastes God hungers for him ; it strengthens our weakness, for by this means God gives us to desire and to accomplish. Devotion directs our actions by setting

much by the very joy he causes in the soul, because it will help the soul, which thinks the joy comes from God, to have recourse to prayer often out of desire for it. If the soul is humble, indifferent to and detatched from all joy, and if it loves the cross, it will make no account of the sweetness that Satan sends. But it cannot thus deal with the sweetness that comes from God, which it will greatly prize. When Satan sends it, as he is nothing but a lie, and he sees that the soul humbles itself through that joy and sweetness—and in all things relating to them we must strive to be humble—he will not often repeat his work when he finds that he loses by it." (*Life*, ch. xv, 16).

[1] Of St. Victor.

charity in order ;[1] imparts grace to our behaviour, for it prevented Sara from joining the wanton, and gives us spiritual sweetness that keeps us from finding the praise of God insipid.

It also testifies to us that we are the sons of God ; it arouses our love, makes us specially intimate with him, and is like oil and tallow by which our souls are illuminated. It yields a pleasant perfume by the costly incense of prayer. Devotion also gives us confidence that we shall obtain what we pray for and prevents us from withdrawing from the charity of Christ. It makes us very merciful, for the spirit of wisdom, which is devotion, is called benign. It humbles the heart, for a juicy twig is easy to bend, and it makes all things sweet, for as the wise man says, its conversation has no bitterness. Its vapour and vestiges drive away all kinds of devils and temptations, while it despises everything under the sun, knowing that all things are vanity. It enriches its possessor, for nothing is more precious than the sweetness of wisdom, as Solomon says, and it invites the angels who come to join those who sing spiritually ; finally, it makes us desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ.

These are the qualities that contemplatives say are proper to devotion and spiritual consolation. Seek your rest in this, as our Letter of the Alphabet bids you. Do not imagine that in order to give himself to the devotion of recollection a man needs logic and metaphysics, though a person of high authority says so, for he must be referring to people who teach or write on the subject, as he states elsewhere. Mystical theology not being connected with learning, does not require the schooling of the mind but rather that of the affections by a fervent practice of the virtues, from which we conclude that there is this difference between them : mystical theology, although it is supreme and perfect knowledge, may yet be possessed by any of the faithful, even though but a woman or simple.[2]

If you desire this sweetness, draw near lovingly to our Lord's feet, humbling yourself like the Magdalen, so that you may hear

[1] After great spiritual consolations the King sets charity in order within the soul so that ' all love for this world quits it, self-love changes into self-hatred and affection is felt for kindred solely for the sake of God. As for the love born for enemies, it would be incredible unless proved by facts ' (*Concep.* vi, 13).

[2] Of this Professor Allison Peers writes : ' The classification of women with the " simple " (*idiotas*) is a sign of the times in which Osuna wrote. But the life and works of S. Teresa form as noble a revenge for such a phrase as one woman ever took for her whole sex ' (*Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, p. 87).

his word. Do not envy the learned, for some of them, like Urias,[1] bear with them the sentence of their own death. Unless the cherubim (whose name means fulness of knowledge) overlay them with the gold of charity, as was done in God's temple as a figure of the Church in which there are many learned men,[2] they that seem 'to be wise shall not dare to behold him,' as Job says.[3] Or rather, they do not seek to see him, as S. Paul declares to them: 'Whereas for the time you ought to be masters; you have need to be taught again what are the first elements of the words of God,' meaning the spiritual exercises of the new devotion, for they have need of milk like beginners. Because they have not humbled themselves, they resemble the Athenians and aliens from Christ who employ themselves 'in nothing else but either in hearing or in telling some new thing.'[4]

S. Paul forbade this to Titus, saying: 'Avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions, and strivings about the law. For they are unprofitable and vain.'[5] We do not mean that both knowledge and devotion are not good, but that the latter is better than the former, for Mary chose the better. Yet he has by far the greater advantage who possesses both, if he strives to relish all he knows. Do not be satisfied with great knowledge, which can only perfect your understanding, but seek great devotion in it as a repose for your will, which looks for and rejoices in what is delightful, as the mind rejoices in the truth. And since there is no greater delight than spiritual consolation, strive for it with all your heart, and your soul will be wholly at rest.

[1] 1 Kings xi, 14. [2] 3 Kings vi, 35. [3] Job xxxvii, 24.
[4] Acts xvii, 21. [5] Tit. iii, 9.

THIRTEENTH TREATISE

TEACHES US HOW WE OUGHT TO SLEEP, SAYING: 'PRAY BEFORE YOU SLEEP AND AGAIN DIRECTLY YOU AWAKE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

BEGINNERS, PROFICIENTS AND THE MORE ADVANCED

TO speak of prayer in a way that can be understood and followed by all, it must be stated that there are three modes of prayer according to the three states of those who practise it: that is, of beginners, proficients, and those greatly addicted to it.

However, it is no easy matter to decide to which class anyone belongs; we must judge rather by the devotion of his heart than by the time spent in it, or by the person himself and his intellect. If anyone, out of humility, wishes to be taken for a beginner, he should, as S. Gregory says, beware lest humility should lead him into falsehood, or while avoiding vainglory he will become untruthful. But if carefully examined, it will be found that there is hardly any man who cannot claim in some respects to belong to one of these three states, and to the first more confidently than to the third, for man by nature never remains permanently in the same condition, and often thinks he rises when he falls. Sometimes when men are in a high state, God deposes them that they may realize more clearly that they were raised, rather than that they mounted of their own accord. Thus we learn more by falling than by ascending.

The first form or mode of prayer is vocal, so that we say that people pray when they recite the Divine Office or any other prayers, pronouncing them with the lips to the praise of God. Among these prayers the most blessed one of the *Pater noster* holds the first place because of the excellence of its Author who

[1] For O, the thirteenth Letter, the Spanish gives: *Oración antes del sueno ten, y despues torna presto.*

is all-wise, and almighty to concede more absolutions to him who says his prayer than S. Gregory granted to anyone who recited his poetry. Therefore no one says this prayer devoutly without being pardoned, for S. Augustine teaches that the Lord remits our venial sins by it. He who offers this prayer with devotion petitions the Father in the name of the Son who composed it, and is therefore heard more promptly, and the more promptly because of the greater love the Eternal Father bore for its Author than for the author of other prayers.

Our Lord told us not to speak much when we pray, but to multiply our affection and love more than our words,[1] as he himself does in this prayer, which is short and begins: 'Our Father.'[2] He first arouses our love for God by calling him Father, and secondly love for our neighbour, whom by this title we make our brother and the son of God by grace, and we pray for him as well as for ourselves by calling God the universal Father of all men. The Church adds at the end of all other prayers, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' but there is no need for this with the Lord's prayer, for, as S. Cyprian says, the Father recognizes his Son's words by their style; also because Christ often said the *Pater noster* when he prayed in person or by all his faithful who were

[1] Teresa underlined the first sentence of this paragraph as far as 'our words.' She treats of vocal prayer at length in the *Camino*, and of how mental prayer must be united to vocal and may thus lead to contemplation. Of the *Pater noster* S. Teresa writes: 'Men say that it is best for women to keep to their spinning; they have no need of all these subtilties—the *Pater noster* and *Ave Maria* are enough for them. So they are, sisters; most certainly they are enough. You are always right in founding your prayer on the prayer that came from our Lord's own lips. . . . As you are alone, seek for some companion—and where could you find a better one than the Master who taught you the prayer you are about to say? . . . Let us accustom ourselves to the fact that we need not call loudly to make God hear us: his Majesty will make us feel he is there. Thus we shall be able to recite in great peace the *Pater noster* or any other that we select. In return for the short time spent in forcing ourselves to keep near him, he will show us that he heard us sufficiently the first time we said it, for he dearly loves to save us trouble. We need not repeat it more than once in a whole hour if only we realize that we are in his presence. He does not want us to make our head ache by much talking' (*Camino*, ch. xxix. The Saint explains the whole of the *Pater noster* in this book, beginning with ch. xxvii.).

[2] 'O thou Son of God and Lord of mine! Why dost thou give us so much with the very first word thou speakest? Besides humbling thyself to the dust by joining thy petitions to our own, and by making thyself the Brother of such miserable wretches as ourselves, thou dost give us in thy Father's name all that can be given—thou dost ask him to make us his children' (*Camino*, ch. xxvii, 2).

taught this prayer before any other by the Apostles. We do not read of any other prayers having been composed for recitation in common except this one.

The chief point in prayer should be that we ask without doubting and with the great confidence that marks this prayer, since we offer it to him who composed it, and the brevity of its words shows, according to the gloss, how very willing God is to grant us what we ask, for he wishes to give us in a brief time what by his order we begged of him in brief sentences. For unless he meant to hear us quickly, clearly he would have prolonged our words. But as our most kind Father cares more for his children than they do for themselves, he chose to shorten the petitions that he might grant them the sooner.

What gives us the greatest confidence in this prayer is that we ask by it what our Lord willed we should, so that we know our petitions are pleasing to God. We are conscious that our mind may err, especially in what we pray for, because we do not know what is good for us, and the prayers of holy persons may not suit us.

But as this prayer was composed by him who knew infallibly what we need, we may safely feel that our petition is right, since the Notary is the same just Judge before whom we have to lay our case. We often pray for what is not necessary, which is a great defect, and at other times we do not beg for all we need, which is also a fault of indiscretion. Our Lord wished to supply for this deficiency by this short prayer, which omits nothing that is good for us and mentions no superfluous matters, so that naught shall be denied to us and we may receive all that we petition.

This most Christian prayer excels in so many ways that as we speak of the 'Canticle of Canticles,' 'the feast of feasts,' 'the holiest of holy things,' so we ought to call this 'the prayer of prayers.' S. Augustine gives as the reason that all prayers should at least partially conform with it. The prayer that asks for more than it contains is not good, and that which most closely resembles it is best.

But we must notice that as all the things that we may rightly ask of God are included in this petition, and sometimes we are more inclined to, or have greater present and especial need for the one than the other, our heart must dwell specially on that point, asking more strenuously for what we require or lack in the clause of the *Pater noster* that refers to it.[1] Those who are about to go to confession should repeat the words: 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us': the

[1] Speaking of the *Pater noster*, S. Teresa says: 'So admirably is this sublime prayer composed by the good Master that everybody may

devout, who desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, should repeat: 'Thy kingdom come,' O Lord! Others, who love the pure honour of God, should stress 'Hallowed be thy name.' Persons inclined to sensuality should reiterate the petition: 'Thy kingdom come' in the earth of my flesh as it has come to the heaven of my reason. Others who feel great need and desire of spiritual consolation, or who are about to receive Holy Communion, must repeat: 'Give us this day our daily bread,' and those in danger should implore: 'Deliver us from evil,' O Lord!

This richest of prayers is so composed that not only does it include all the petitions that the different states of men should make to God, but every just man needs each of the seven things it asks. It should not be omitted even by the greatest sinner, who should beg for the seven things it asks in order to protect himself from vice.

The proud who wish to increase their reputation and authority in the world, should say: 'Hallowed be thy name, O Lord! Give glory to thy name and not to our ostentation and presumption which should most justly be humbled.'

The avaricious, inclined to covet the earthly things they see, should look up to heaven and recite the second petition: 'Thy kingdom come, O Lord, which has been promised to the poor in spirit so that, satisfied by faith and hope with him who is our Desire, we may not seek what pertains to the kingdom of this world with harmful eagerness.'

The envious, and those who grieve at the good of others must ask of the Lord that his will may be done in the barren land, that is, in worthless men, as it is in heaven, typifying the soul of the just in which God dwells. 'Thy will be done, O Lord, in my enemy, who is the earth, as it is in heaven, that is, in my friend, since thou dost rain on all and bestow thy favours on them. Let thy will be done in both, and as thy will to grant graces is done in my neighbour, who is heaven, let it be done in me, the earth, since thou dost rain on the just and on the unjust.'

He who has to struggle against love of luxury and vain joys should remember the spiritual delights of the Lord which he gives to those who, for love of him, reject the pleasures of the body,

apply it to his own wants. I am astonished at finding all perfection and contemplation comprised in it. . . . I have sometimes wondered why his Majesty did not speak more clearly on such sublime subjects, so that we might all understand his meaning. Then I reflected that perhaps he left the meaning obscure because this prayer was meant for all men, and thus each might ask for what he wanted and feel happy in the idea that he was using the words in their right sense' (*Camino*, ch. xxxvii, 2).

and should say : ' Give us this day our daily bread, which is the grace of thy consolation in my soul, for God's true bread witnesses that the bread of vain delight is false and does not satisfy my soul.'

When people are in a passion they should beg the Lord to forgive them their debts so that they can the better pardon those with whom they are angry. If they do this to the best of their power, at least so far as to control their passionate wrath, God will make them so meek and humble of heart that they will not know how to be angry except with themselves.

Greedy people must repeat : ' Lead us not into temptation, permitting us to fall into the sin of gluttony by which Adam and our Lord Christ were tempted.' It is called temptation because the devil dissimulates and leads men by gluttony, as by an insignificant fault, into many other temptations ; this we must beg God not to permit.

Those who suffer from spiritual sloth, which is despondency and discontent with divine matters, must implore God to deliver them from this evil. It is called a vice because it brings many ills with it and keeps men from receiving the numerous blessings God would have given them.

By what I have said, you will understand that though we may be bound to recite the whole *Pater noster*, we must sometimes dwell longer on one petition than on the rest because we are more wearied by combat with some special fault. It would be well, when we have said the entire prayer, to select the sentence suitable to us and repeat it with the first clauses, which do not ask for anything and can be used with any one of the petitions. For instance, when the soul hungers for spiritual consolation, a man may say : ' Our Father who art in heaven, give us this day our daily bread and do not permit the soul of the least of thy servants to pass this day without thy consolation, since it is so necessary for him.' And when your soul desires to be with Jesus Christ you will say : ' Our Father who art in heaven, let thy kingdom come in me, since I cannot go to thee,' or ' Let me go, O Lord, to thy kingdom as thou dost make me long for it.' This may be your plan whenever you are in urgent need of any grace.

CHAPTER II

AN EXPLANATION OF THE ' PATER NOSTER ' GIVEN BY S. FRANCIS

OUR Lord's prayer being of a higher rank than any others, many of the saints have given fine explanations of it. As they are very

numerous, I do not state them here, and only set forth that by S. Francis which was both written and used by him. Whoever examines it carefully will see that it is not without good reason that I have chosen it, for without doubt I have never read one more useful for all the faithful nor one that more inflames the heart of the devout. The explanation, together with the words of the *Pater noster*, begins as follows :

'Our most blessed Father, our Creator, Redeemer, Saviour, and Consoler, who art in heaven, in the angels, in the saints, enlightening them that they may understand, because thou, O Lord, art Light. Thou dost inflame them to love, for thou, Lord, art Love and dost dwell in them ; and thou dost fill them, O Lord, in order that they may be blessed, for thou art the supreme and eternal Good from which comes all good, and without which nothing is good. " Hallowed be thy name " ; may knowledge of thee be hallowed in us, that we may know what is the breadth of thy mercies, the length of thy tenderness, the height of thy Majesty, and the depth of thy judgements. " Thy kingdom come " to us that thou mayest reign in us by grace and make us come to thy kingdom where thy vision is manifested, thy love is perfect, thou dost satisfy blissfully, and thy fruition and joy are sempiternal.

' "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," that we may love thee with all our heart, ever think of thee, desire thee with all our soul, and be mindful to direct all our intentions to thee, seeking thy honour in all things, and spending all our strength and senses of soul and body in thy service, Lord, and on no other object. And, O Lord, may we love our neighbours as ourselves, drawing them to love thee as best we can, and rejoicing in their good fortune as though it were our own, compassionating their ills and giving offence to no one. " Give us this day our daily bread," thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, with reverent memory and understanding of the love he bore us and of what he said and did and suffered for us.

' " And forgive us our trespasses " by thine unspeakable mercy and by virtue of the Passion of thy beloved Son, of the intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary, and of all the elect, " as we forgive our debtors." And what we do not wholly forgive, make us, Lord, to pardon completely, that we may truly love our enemies for love of thee and duly pray to thee for them, " not rendering to anyone evil for evil." And may we try to help all in thee.

' " And lead us not into temptation " whether secret or open,

by surprise or by impulse, " but deliver us from evil " both present, past, and to come. Amen.'

If we wanted to show how excellent this explanation is, we should have to give a gloss of it and to explain how much to the purpose, how thoroughly according to Christ's meaning are the words added to each petition, but true-hearted love so shines in them all that we need say no more.

Although, as we said, the *Pater noster* stands first among vocal prayers, others should not be rejected or it would become wearisome. Besides, many saintly personages have composed other approved prayers, and it is often well for a man to pray in words of his own like the publican, Anna the mother of Samuel, Judas Machabeus, and many others who in short sentences of their own prayed vocally to the Lord, asking with deep devotion for what they needed, for such prayer gives rise to many tears in him who makes it, and as the words are fresh and apply to his special necessities, he says them with all his heart.

As you have seen, vocal prayer is a petition that we present or send to God in which we ask him for what we require.[1] Though it is well for a man to use the forms given him by other holy persons, it is an excellent practice and very pleasing to God if he composes or writes with the pen of his tongue a new and brief petition for every fresh need. For as men of high rank enjoy hearing rustics talk simply in their country language, so the Lord is greatly pleased when we are so eager to speak to him that we do not wait to find set and elegant phrases, but tell him what we want plainly, like the woman of Canaan who cried : ' Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David : my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil.'[2] And the prodigal son prayed to the heavenly Father : ' Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee : I am not now worthy to be called thy son : make me as one of thy hired servants.'[3] The mother of Samuel, who was childless, prayed, saying : ' O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt look down on the affliction of thy servant, and wilt be mindful of me, and not forget thy handmaid, and wilt give to thy servant a man-child : I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life.'[4]

Scripture is full of such prayers, composed by the persons themselves and asking in a few words for their present needs. As this kind of vocal prayer is efficient and soon obtains what is

[1] S. Teresa said little about vocal prayer except in her explanation of the *Pater noster*, and she interpreted that principally as regards contemplation.

[2] S. Matt. xv, 22. [3] S. Luke xv, 18, 19. [4] 1 Kings i, 11.

asked, the faithful should make frequent use of it in brief sentences of their own composition, not only before going to sleep but before all their actions, commending each thing separately to the Lord, and speaking to him familiarly in words suited to the case. At one time souls may complain to him, showing him their needs, at another they may confess their sins, or ask mercy and grace and help against the dangers and trials of the world that beset them or their friends.

CHAPTER III

OF THE SECOND KIND OF PRAYER

THE second kind of prayer is that within our heart, when without pronouncing the words vocally by our lips, the heart alone speaks to the Lord; and within ourselves, we ask him for all we need. There, as in a hidden place, heard by none, we speak to him in privacy, and the favours received are wont to be greater, for we speak as it were into the ear of God. David prayed in this manner when he said: 'Thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to thee.'[1]

In order that this prayer may be more protracted than the former one, being much more excellent, a man must find his heart: that is, he must withdraw it from other cares, whatever they may be, if they are blameless and superfluous. The holy prophet who led the Israelites out of Egypt prayed in this mode. He was silent and his heart spoke: and the Lord asked him: 'Why criest thou to me?'[2] to show that holy thoughts sound more loudly in his ears than words, and are even of far higher value because good thoughts alone are very precious and good words without them almost worthless. For God looks rather at the heart than at the tongue, which receives its value from the heart, but the heart never receives it from the tongue except in confession of the Faith, which in certain cases must be pronounced by the tongue.

In this mode of prayer made by the heart while the tongue is silent may be comprised all holy and devout thoughts, whether of our Lord's Passion, of the Church, the Judgement, or any other devotional subject. For evidently they are praying who meditate or think upon the sacred Passion, as are even those who

[1] 2 Kings vii, 27.
[2] Exod. xiv, 15.

think over their sins as they ought, since they only do so in order to ask for mercy on them.[1]

This kind of prayer, which consists in holy thoughts, requires that a man should commit to memory the sacred history and mysteries of our Lord, besides what he hears and reads on the subject, to be as fuel to feed the fire on the altar of the Lord. But the most fruitful thoughts that a man can have are those on the sacred Passion, as I said in Letter B of the *First Alphabet*, though it is often well to change the food for thought to the different festivals of the Church. Although this second mode of prayer, which is thinking and making use of holy meditations, does not seem fitting for beginners or uneducated persons, it is not entirely unsuitable for them, as they are obliged at times to ponder on sacred things, to desire eternal happiness and many other supreme gifts, and to love God above all things. This they cannot do without fixing their mind on him, for it is natural to love to dwell in thought on the Beloved. They are also bound to receive the holy Sacrament, which presupposes a certain amount of devout consideration by which to prepare for it.[2]

[1] Of those who practise meditation, S. Teresa says: 'Let them place themselves in the presence of Christ, and though not fatiguing the understanding, converse with and rejoice in him without tiring themselves by searching for reasons. . . . We set ourselves to meditate upon some mystery of the Passion: let us say, our Lord at the pillar. The understanding seeks for the sources whence came the great dolours and bitter anguish that his Majesty endured in that desolation. It considers that mystery in many lights. . . . This is a method of prayer which should be to everyone the beginning, the middle, and the end: a most excellent and safe way, until our Lord guides them to other supernatural ways. I say this to all, because there are many souls who make greater progress by meditation on other subjects than the sacred Passion' (*Life*, ch. xiii). . . . 'Those who do not meditate on this subject [the Passion] had better begin to do so, for I know that it will not impede the most sublime prayer, nor is it well to omit practising this often' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. vii). 'With utter humility talk to God as to your Father: ask for what you want as from a father: tell him your sorrows and beg him for relief. Lay aside a certain reticence that some people maintain towards him under the impression that it is humility. . . . Though only vocal, yet this kind of prayer rivets the thoughts much more quickly than any other, and has many advantages' (*Camino*, ch. xxviii).

[2] 'Those who advance without meditation make great progress because it is done by love. . . . For those who walk in this way a book is profitable, that by its aid they may the more quickly recollect themselves' (*Life*, ix). 'For more than fourteen years I could not meditate without a book. There are many people of this kind, and others cannot meditate even with the help of reading, but are obliged to recite vocal prayers' (*Camino*, ch. xvii).

I also mentioned the longing for eternal happiness, for we shall never obtain it unless we think of it. But the religious and the recluse who have left the world to devote themselves to contemplation are still more strictly obliged to this manner of prayer, and have, or ought to have, far more opportunity for it on account of the sacred edifice in which they dwell, which is dedicated and constituted for more perfect prayer.[1] So, as vocal prayer is common to all good seculars living in the world, the second form of prayer should be common to all good religious in their monastery, which ought to be a house of prayer, not a den of thieves, as it would be if, while maintained on the alms of others, they did not pray but gossiped and wandered about, against the intention of their benefactors. This would be robbery or spoliation, for whoever uses what is another's contrary to the will and right intention of the owner, usurps what is not his own and may be called a robber.[2] Now undoubtedly alms are bestowed on us in order that we may pray without distraction. Unless we do this, we run contrary to the chief intention of the benefactor, of whom I consider we are the debtors ; for granted that it is given by him for love of God, he bestows it on the condition that it enables us to render better service to the Lord. Otherwise alms would only be given us in cases of extreme necessity with the object of saving the life of one's neighbour.

Requisite leisure, the sanctity of the house, the sublimity of the religious life, good companions, freedom from anxiety about temporal cares, the strict obligation of the vows, continual pious practices, and the good example of others, combined with plenitude of holy teaching, orderly regulation of time, decrease of worldly cares, frequentation of the Sacrament of the altar and other advantages of the sort bind and incite religious to devote themselves fervently to meditation and consideration of sacred and divine mysteries. For each of these things, and for others

[1] ' All we who wear the holy habit of the Carmelites are called to prayer and contemplation. This was the object of our Order ; to this lineage do we belong. Our holy Fathers of Mount Carmel sought in perfect solitude and utter contempt of the world for this treasure, this precious pearl of which we speak, and we are their descendants ' (*Castle*, M. v, ch. i, 2).

[2] ' How happy you will feel if someone is saved from hell by means of the alms he gave you ! This is quite possible, for you are bound to pray constantly for the souls of those who maintain you. It is the will of God that, although all we have comes from him, yet we should show gratitude to those through whom he gives it, and by no means must you neglect to do so ' (*Camino*, ch. iii, 8).

which I do not remember now, God will require a strict account, as well as for the special personal graces he has bestowed, because the former are common to all religious. They will have to answer for these first; after that, God has said that he will search our conscience and soul with candles, for he will look for the special gifts he gave us and will not allow us to forget or hide away even the least of them without calling us to account for it and for the good we might have done to ourselves and others had we made use of it.

If any religious wishes to know how harmful vocal prayer is for those who desire to give themselves to contemplation, let him read the first treatise on prayer by Roseto, and he will see of what little use such prayer is and what harm it does to those who have made progress, as it is a great obstacle to their perfection. But you must understand that this applies to vocal prayer that is not obligatory, for by no means must that which is of obligation be neglected, though a man may have reached a very high state of contemplation. As regards the Divine Office, wait until your mind is free from emotion before reciting it, and attend more to the devotional meaning of the words than to their pronunciation, for you are speaking to God, not to men. Do not confess to priests who, if you tell them you went to sleep during the Divine Office, give you one Hail Mary for your penance, or who, if you accuse yourself of not so attending to the words as to take their meaning to heart, are scandalized and quote examples and reasons to prove that you need not have confessed it, and tell you that you are mistaken about matters of which they know nothing. It often happens that people who are very zealous about the words never attain the object of them, which, according to S. Augustine, is devotion. When this is obtained, words should cease. But if they are of obligation, they ought to be said out of reverence for the vows, lest God should lose by the graces he has given us, or we should fail in humility by making ourselves singular and thinking that high contemplation frees us from minor obligations.

Though religious desirous of making progress should not recite more than the Divine Office and some prayer to our Lady, yet as all have not the same desire and are not so earnest and fervent, it is far better to recite prayers with devotion than to contemplate tepidly, so that religious should practise either the one or the other. If their heart does not pray, let their mouth open to attract the Holy Ghost, to get rid of slackness, and to edify hearers who do not know what is in their soul. Thus the devil will be put to

flight and their tongue will from time to time perform its office, which is to praise its Creator.

The more excellent spiritual matters are, the greater is the difficulty connected with them, therefore holy thoughts should not be relinquished at once if they do not induce as much devotion as vocal prayer, for this may be a mistake, and a very great one, caused by the devil to withdraw us from better things. During the first year, little devotion is found in holy thoughts, but later on our Lord gives so much that it remains during the whole day in the heart with little decrease, and the soul clearly realizes that one such day is worth more than a year spent in reciting prayers. Therefore you must persevere in holy thoughts if you wish them to become so efficacious that you seem to see with your eyes what you are thinking in your heart, and that to the interior and secret thought of the soul your affections may correspond as fully as you wish, so that when you meditate on what is sad your tears may flow, or if your thoughts are happy you may be full of joy, and when your mind is bent on what is wonderful and sublime, you may go out of yourself with supreme amazement.

CHAPTER IV

ANOTHER KIND OF PRAYER

By the third kind of prayer, which is called mental or spiritual, the highest part of our soul rises more purely and affectionately to God by the wings of desire and holy aspiration strengthened by love. The greater the love, the fewer and more comprehensive are its words and the more to the point, for love, when genuine, does not seek for lengthened reasoning but effects great things in silence, and knows that if it withdraws from creatures and recollects itself in God, he will receive it unreservedly, and the more so in proportion to its greater recollection and fervour.

Of those who pray thus our Lord says in the Gospel: 'True adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth,' for God is a Spirit, and it is fitting to adore him in spirit and in truth, and he 'seeketh such to adore him.'[1] The greater the conformity between him who prays and the Lord to whom his prayers are directed, the more acceptable will the prayer be. Therefore, as the Father is pure spirit and in no way corporal, the less our prayer participates of the imagination and even of the thoughts of the heart, the more pleasing it will be to him, for however high

[1] S. John iv, 23.

these thoughts may be, they cannot but be very low compared with God. But desires that embrace God in his essence with no resemblance to what is bodily, and love that is unmindful of words, pray to God in the most spiritual and direct way, for the soul that prays thus utters nothing but the words from the Canticles : ' My beloved to me, and I to him.'[1] No words could be more spiritual or more recollected or comprehensive or could exemplify more clearly the goal of prayer to those who experience it.[2]

All that remains for God to do for his friend is to give himself to him, and the soul can do no more than give itself to God, but since it cannot do this perfectly without his aid, the bride says first ' my Beloved to me '—not ' I to my Beloved.'[3] But it must be noticed that this gift of man to God and God to man is so perfect that when God gives himself he seems to be within the man wholly and completely. I mean that if faith did not enlighten the man who possesses God, he might almost say that God is contained in him and does not exist outside him. At times the righteous soul feels that it is so full of God that its narrow bosom seems to set a boundary to him who in truth is infinite. The gift of themselves that recollected souls sometimes make to God is so inclusive that they keep nothing back and lose their free choice and will, and are so wholly recollected and yielded up to him that they are as forgetful of themselves as though they no longer existed.

Of these three kinds of prayer the wise man says : ' Behold I have described it to thee three manner of ways.'[4] The interlineal gloss explains that these three ways are in word, which is vocal prayer ; in thought, which is the prayer of the heart ; and in deed, which is the spiritual prayer of recollection, which, if genuine, exceeds the two former manners as much as deeds surpass speech and thought.

These three modes of prayer are figured by the three cities of refuge[5] and by the three loaves that we should ask to have lent

[1] Cant. ii, 16.

[2] ' Well does the bride say in the Canticles : " My Beloved to me and I to my Beloved." My Beloved to me, for no such love could spring from love so base as mine. Yet if my love be base, O my Bridegroom, why does it pass by all creatures until it reaches its Creator ? . . . O my soul ! what a blessed conflict thou hast waged during this trial. Since " my Beloved is to me and I to my Beloved," who will strive to separate and extinguish two such ardent flames ? It would be labour lost, for they are now one ' (*Exclam.* xv, *Minor Works*).

[3] Compare with this S. Teresa's *Exclamation*, No. xv, *Minor Works of S. Teresa*.

[4] Prov. xxii, 20.

[5] Deut. xix.

to us for our friend,[1] also the three days after which Jesus was found in the temple of the soul; the three days at the end of which he rises again in our heart, and the threefold prayer of our Lord in the garden.

The first prayer is like a written message despatched to a friend; the second resembles one sent to a person very near and dear to us; the third is as though we went in person. The first is the kiss of the feet; the second the kiss of the hands; the third the kiss of the mouth. The first stands for faith, which we ought to confess with our mouth: the second for hope, which we should hold in our heart: the third for charity, which we should show in our actions. The first belongs to the purgative state, the second to the illuminative, the third to perfection, the three hierarchical acts. The first perfects the memory, the second perfects the understanding, and the third the will.

As in the law of grace, which is the third state of the law, higher benefits and graces are granted by the Lord than in the first or natural law, or in the second which is the written law, so in the third manner of prayer God bestows higher favours than in the two former states.

Though these three kinds of prayer may be ascribed to the three states of mankind, the married, the clergy, and religious, yet as in each state there are beginners, proficients, and the more perfect, the three kinds are suitable to each state according to the disposition of its members. No one should boast of the perfection of his state if he is wanting in perfection himself, for it is better to keep the commandments well than to observe the counsels badly, and God is better pleased with the servant who is faithful in few things than with him who is negligent in many.

Not only to the different states of life and persons living in them are these three kinds of prayer suitable, but often to each individual, at various times and in his different moods, for sometimes a man is more fitted for one sort of prayer than another, or he may receive more grace than he expected, while at others he is so abased that he is obliged to return to the very beginning. To all who practise these three kinds of prayer this Letter of the Alphabet says: 'Pray before you sleep and return to prayer promptly when you awake.'

To quote words worthy of remembrance, the devout should prepare no less carefully before sleep than the undevout does before death, for as we shall be judged according to the state in

[1] S. Luke xi, 5, 6.

which we die, so we shall be according to the state in which we fell asleep if death takes us before awakening. I knew a man who went to bed in good health and died without rising or even saying that he was in pain.

We read of many men who went to sleep in sound health and died unexpectedly. Perhaps if they had prayed before they slept they would not thus have died, or if they had died, and were in need of slumber, their sleep might have been reckoned as prayer, especially if, as our Letter bids us, they had meant to return to prayer directly they awoke, since it is usual for the centre to resemble the two extremes, and the extremes to be like the centre, and that they should relate to one another. Therefore it is a very praiseworthy custom to say some devout prayers before sleeping and to recite others on rising, thanking God for watching over us while we slept and not allowing the devil to throttle us as he throttled Sara's husbands.

Those who practise the second mode of prayer and give themselves to holy thoughts should also pray before they sleep, for it is a common thing for a man to dream of the subject that filled his mind beforehand. If this was good, the dream will be good. This was shown in the case of a poor ignorant woman who had for days felt a keen hunger and longing for Holy Communion. One night she dreamt that she had received it, and awoke with such sweetness of devotion that she knew God had spiritually fulfilled her longing, and she experienced great joy for some time afterwards. For the just are as delighted with good dreams as they are depressed by bad ones ; not because they had a dream but because it was a good one—I mean that, being good, the memory instigates them to what is right. Some devout religious, when they lie down, recite interiorly Psalms that begin with the letters that form the name of Jesus. These are : *In Domino confido ; Eructavit cor meum ; Saepe expugnaverunt ; Verba mea ; Salvum me fac, Domine.*[1]

If this list does not suit you, other Psalms can be selected. If you do not fall asleep while reciting them, you can say some that will form our Lady's name. Those who do not know the Psalms may recite other prayers, think of the Passion (which will be a most fruitful practice), or of other sacred and devout subjects that attract them.

For those who practise the third manner of prayer by way of recollection, it is necessary to pray by becoming recollected before

[1] At the time this book was written, ' v ' and ' u ' were interchangeable, as were ' i ' and ' j.'

they sleep, the preparation being to recollect the heart and quiet it as the wise man says : ' Thou shalt rest, and thy sleep shall be sweet.'[1]

He says first that you must rest in the prayer of recollection, that sweetness will follow a sleep founded on prayer, and when you wake, whatever the hour may be, you must return at once to the same recollection. Do not forget to guard your heart before its attention wanders.

Be so exact about praying before you retire for the night that, whatever the hour may be, you never go to rest without making a quarter of an hour's prayer. When you lie down, keep guard over your heart, so that you may seem to go to rest in order to pray rather than to sleep. On awakening, return to prayer as lovingly as the child turns to the cake its mother gave it, searching to see whether it has fallen out of bed, and sleeping holds it fast.

Those who pray before they sleep become so accustomed to it that they cannot rest without it. The soul that is used to recollect itself cannot slumber without first doing so, for the quiet that nature ordains before sleep is ordained by the devout soul for prayer.

In order to sleep the heart must be calmed ; a certain amount of exterior and interior quietude is requisite so that the outward and inner senses are at rest. But it is in a man's power to direct this preparation rather to prayer than to slumber, so that the soul may enjoy spiritual, holy repose rather than the body.

It must be noticed that corporal and spiritual slumber differ in some respects. The former is a soothing feeling that comforts and repairs nature by drawing the natural outer warmth into the interior, closing the passages of the senses with the dense fumes that come from indigested food on account of the natural heat which has gone into the stomach. Then the animal powers enjoy rest, and the natural powers are more intense and radical in their operation in proportion to the soundness of the slumber.

Sleep is necessary to sustain the life of the body, and spiritual sleep is needed by the perfect to preserve the life of love which they receive from God with a tranquil suavity that withdraws love from the heart that it may be vigilant and the senses sleep as regards creatures. The fumes caused by the warmth arising from the graces bestowed do not close the channels of the soul, but rather widen them, so that the powers of the soul may act and the natural powers may cease. And the more the latter cease and enjoy rest, the more delightfully and truly do the former act

[1] Prov. iii, 24.

through the whole interior man, which is comforted and restored to such an extent that sometimes the body can dispense with sleep because spiritual slumber has supplied all its needs. At the least, a person who would have required four hours is now satisfied with one, and on awaking returns to prayer at once, which he could not have done had he not prayed before he slept.

It is certain, and well known from experience by the recollected, that the more they pray before they sleep, the sooner do they return to prayer when they wake. Though it is difficult to believe it, sometimes the soul returns to prayer before awakening ;[1] and at times it is even in its power either to wake or not.

The reason is that inward and exterior awakenings are very different. The soul within the body is like the living water beneath the dead ice, or the live chicken within the shell that it has not broken, or Jonas the prophet in the belly of the whale where he could pray to God.

CHAPTER V

CONCERNING THE MANNER OF SLEEPING

THOUGH there is nothing more unreliable than dreams, nor is there anything a man should more quickly forget because they are unreliable, yet the recollected sometimes dream much that is good.

That dreams are founded on falsehood is shown by their extravagance, and every man, however simple he may be, knows that on awaking he should cast away the thought of them, for as the wise man says : ' Where there are many dreams, there are many vanities.'[2]

However, the devil is so astute that, as he knows our dreams and often causes them, he makes the thing we dreamt about happen during the day so that we may give credit to dreams. For instance, if you dreamt that a house fell on to you and while you are walking in the street the wind blows a slate off the roof, you say your dream came true. Or you dream that you talk to someone who is far away, and if next day you receive a letter from him or hear news of his health, you say your dream was fulfilled. To avoid this and numberless other vanities—traps set idly or maliciously

[1] ' I never ceased to be in prayer : even during sleep my prayer seemed to be continual ' (*Life*, xxix, 9).

[2] Eccl. v, 6.

by the devil—the wise man warns us: 'Dreams have deceived many, and they have failed that put their trust in them.'[1]

To show how vain dreams are, you must know that it is very common for people to dream of what they desire or fear or think much about. Dreams vary according to different illnesses or dispositions of the dreamers, who, even when in good health, are inclined to dream more on certain subjects than on others. The dreams of the sanguine are happy and pleasant; those of the melancholy are sad and mournful; the phlegmatic dream of water, rivers, streams, snow, and fishes; the choleric of bitter, unpleasant things, dreams being influenced by the sleeper's temperament. At times they arise from some event, so that people who are offended dream of quarrels and enemies dream they fight one another.

I have said this to warn all Christians to forget their dreams as quickly as their slumber, and not to remember or examine into them during the day. Even if a dream is fulfilled, they should overlook it and take no notice of it, for as I said, the devil is trying to make us wonder at nothing and to fill us with idle cares and curiosity.

You, brother, who practise recollection, should be very watchful about the time after Matins, for the sleep taken then is meant rather for the soul than the body. Never lie down drowsily, but be very wide awake in your longing for the Lord. Like the bride, seek for him at night in your bed, and when you become drowsy before you lie down, awake yourself with holy aspirations. I do not tell you not to sleep, but not to go to bed only half awake, for you could not then follow the advice of our Letter of the Alphabet to pray even while you are in bed before going to sleep and to guard your heart at once whenever you awake. Sleep well before Matins to prevent your slumbering in choir and to enable you to recollect yourself and pray better before and after. Then you will be able to lie down after Matins feeling that you do so rather to pray than to sleep.

The pillow should be rather high; you may turn your face to the heavens if your head can bear it; feel no fear, for grace will comfort you when it comes and repay you for your efforts to obtain it. If you sleep during the time in which you are accustomed to pray, call your eyes to account and see what you gave them; if they hold their salary fast, you must realize that this slumber is a relaxation and drive it from you with a discipline, or take up a book and read while this wrongful sleepiness besets you.

[1] Ecclus. xxxiv, 7.

Then, when you take your lawful rest, grace may awaken you, for it often arouses those who watch for it when they least expect it. If you behave in this way, you will serve God as much while you sleep as when you are awake.

Those who devote themselves to this holy practice with all their heart should not leave their cell after Compline unless absolutely obliged, but should spend the whole time until they sleep in prayer, kneeling in the middle of their cell. If the time is too long for them to continue doing this, let them sit upright on a seat, their face turned to heaven and cast all cares from their mind, for this is not the season for thinking of earthly things. Let them give themselves wholly to divine matters until there are four hours left for sleep before Matins, if they are novices in spiritual practices. Let them pray with faith and purity of heart to their guardian angel to wake them a short time before Matins, and no doubt he will do so. If they are awakened too soon by some noise, let them believe it is through the devil who wishes to disturb them now so that they may slumber during the Divine Office. But if they awake with peace and devotion at the proper hour, let them not be slothful in rising lest their angel may find they were making a laughing-stock of him when he woke them at the right hour.

After having been very vigilant and alert at Matins, you must return to prayer for a longer period, being careful to avoid the drowsiness which besets the tepid in all their devout exercises. Though their heart is in God's presence and they are standing in the presence of their superiors reciting the Divine Office, their heads are nodding, and when they say they are going to meditate on the Passion, the passion of sleep overcomes them as it did the Apostles in the garden, and they slumber. But you, brother, who are new to recollection, if besides your slackness in the practice you are also assaulted by drowsiness, must be very careful to drive it away either by thinking on devout subjects that will incite you to the love of God, or by reading, walking, reciting prayers, pinching yourself mercilessly, washing well with cold water, begging your master to quote some words of our Lord to repel sleep, betaking yourself to some place where shame or fear will keep you awake, or performing some other bodily exercise. And if all this does not suffice, take a discipline to drive sleep away from you by force, reciting the words of the Psalm: 'My chastisement hath been in the mornings,'[1] so that I should not slumber.

[1] Ps. lxxii, 14.

You ought to reckon all the time after Matins as the morning, especially if you took whatever rest you needed in the first part of the night as you should do, rendering first to Cæsar what is his, as our Lord commands, otherwise your sacrifice will be a sacrifice of rapine which the Lord hates. You ought to think that when you sleep without real necessity the devil is loading you with a very heavy mountain on the top of you, and that to cast it off, you must watch and pray lest he should take you captive under it. But when you watch, your angel comes and rejoices with you, and strives to purify your memory, to enlighten your understanding and perfect your will, which you will lose if you slumber.

Proficients in the way of recollection drive away slumber merely by recollecting themselves. They require less sleep, for if a beginner needs six hours, they should be satisfied with five. But those perfect in this exercise lose their sleep, for their interior feelings arouse them when they try to rest ; they hardly slumber three hours at night and wake at the least sound. Their sleep resembles drinking by sips, for they cannot take all their rest at once. But our Lord compensates by their happiness for the want of rest, delivering them from their necessities for the time being,[1] though the sensitive part of nature remains rather unsatisfied.

I have known many recollected persons who have passed several years with not more than three hours' sleep at night. I was acquainted with another who told his great friend as a secret that in seventeen years he had not taken more than the amount of sleep usually allowed for four months. He had received greater graces which he was unable to conceal, but no one knew of this, as he spent much time in his cell where nobody could tell whether he was asleep or awake.

Blessed are those who pray much before they sleep and return to prayer when they awake. Like Elias, they eat a little and fall asleep, and wake and eat and sleep again,[2] and thus they pass their time, reclining, as it were, on our Lord's breast after supper. Or they are like a babe on the breast of its mother who sleeps after taking milk, and wakes and sucks and falls asleep again. With these glorious intervals, the perfect pass their time for slumber, which may rather be reckoned as prayer than sleep, since their chief intention was to pray ; they spend most of the time when others sleep in prayer, and when they wake they know that while they slumbered their soul rested in the arms of their Beloved.

[1] Ps. xxiv, 17. [2] 3 Kings xix.

FOURTEENTH TREATISE

ADVISES HOW TO CORRECT THE SOUL, SAYING: 'ALWAYS CORRECT YOUR SOUL LOVINGLY AND NOT IN ANGER.'[1]

CHAPTER I

WANDERING THOUGHTS

ACCORDING to the Apostle, 'in many things we all offend' not only once but many times, for 'the just man falls seven times a day.' To the wise it is evident that we offend greatly, for we ought not to commit even a venial sin for all the world could give us.[2] As we offend greatly and in many ways and things, we need to be constantly corrected. Therefore our Letter bids us constantly correct our soul, lovingly and without anger.

Man should correct himself in two ways. The first and most necessary is to withdraw from evil to good as we are bound to do, for if fraternal correction is binding on a Christian, much more so is the correction of his own soul, with which he is in closer relation. Of this correction from evil to good, the wise man says: 'The perverse are hard to be corrected.'[3]

One whose good habits are perverted and become evil requires more time to reform than he took to go wrong. For if he gave way to some vice for a year, he will need to practise the contrary virtue for two years in order to change his bad habits for good ones. Hence the sage declares that the perverse are hard to correct, for not only must they uproot the vice but must plant the virtue in its place and wait until it flourishes as the vice did.

This first correction pertains to sinners: the second, which is to change good for better, is performed by the just, of whom the wise man declares: 'He that is righteous correcteth his way.'[4]

[1] For P, the fourteenth Letter of the Alphabet, the Spanish gives: *Por amor é sin enojo corrige siempre tu anima.*

[2] 'You must be extremely vigilant about venial sins, so that you would rather suffer persecution from the whole human race than fall into this offence' (*Camino*, ch. xli, 3).

[3] Eccles. i, 15. [4] Prov. xxi, 29.

'The righteous' in Holy Scripture are the just who love God, and these correct their ways, not because they were wrong, but in order to run and ascend in virtue and go from good to better.

As regards the just, the first thing that the recollected should correct is negligence; I do not allude to mortal sin, as no vice must hold empire over them, for the wicked soul could in no way have the courage to practise interior recollection. Yet those who begin to correct themselves are often more tormented in mind than are other people. It is natural to feel wrongs done to one, which cannot but make some impression on the mind. If a man represses this so that he does not act upon it, yet it infuriates the heart that strives to hide its feelings, and the just man should inflict on himself the punishment deserved by the guilty because he feels the wrong so keenly and takes some time to appease his anger. The blessed S. Bernard acted thus when he complained of himself to our Lord, saying: 'Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, for not only is it filled with vain thoughts and defiled with impurity, but even distracted with bitterness, for often when annoyed by some injury done to me, my heart is full of a continuous tumult of feelings. Tossed to and fro I am beset and swayed on every side by the thought of what reprisals I can take for the injury done to me and how to avenge myself. I make endless plans, and my heart is bent solely on paying off my grudges in imagination as I cannot do so in act. I do not see the people around me but contradict the absent. In fancy, I insult and am insulted and reply with even harsher abuse; as there is no one to answer me, I devise a quarrel. I think over the plots of the envious and what they might do and what I could do in return, and as it is all factitious, I labour like a litigant without a case. So I pass the day in idleness and the night in cogitation. I am slow in doing useful work because I am wearied with unlawful thoughts, and fight my battles in my memory because I meet with no resistance outside me. At other times the outward actions I have performed revert importunately to my mind, and often their memory torments me more than the act itself; frequently things that I never did or ever wished to do so haunt my thoughts that I almost wish that I had done them. Cleanse me, O Lord, from my secret sins, for my outward actions cause me to sin gravely in my thoughts, because what I have seen and done is imprinted in my heart, so that a tumult of worldly cares revolves within it even when at rest. For though the mind is kept fasting from such subjects, it speaks while I am silent and is angry when I am at peace. While the body is motionless, the soul roams from one

place to another.' The Saint here shows the soul's need of recollection, since it contains such disorder and revolt that attack it.

The recollected resemble men who trap birds for cages. Before the birds are caged, they rest quietly on the branches ; afterwards they are never quiet but flutter to and fro and bruise their heads by trying to escape. If they get out, they fly so far that the bird-catcher loses all hopes of entrapping them again. In the same way, when a devout person tries to enclose his soul in the cage of recollection, it becomes more restless than ever ; he finds that he has lost his bygone peace and feels aggrieved at enjoying less tranquillity than before he began the exercise. Sometimes his fancy takes such flights that he loses all hope of being able to practise recollection. In endeavouring to remedy the evil, he uses such force to drive away his wandering thoughts, and is so distressed by them that it makes his head ache and weakens and injures his body in no small degree. He tries to correct by severity what would be better amended by kindly toleration according to the advice of this Letter of the Alphabet: 'Always correct your soul lovingly and not in anger.'

CHAPTER II

HOW TO TREAT YOUR SOUL WHEN THOUGHTS DISTRACT IT

To return to the comparison of a bird in a cage. Evidently it could be tamed and reconciled better by kindness than by harshness, and with gentle words rather than by rough speech that would terrify it. You will reassure it better by stroking its feathers tenderly than by striking or threatening it. So when you feel that your soul is straying to various distressing subjects, do not disturb or trouble it more, but correct it affectionately with a few loving words ;[1] as for instance: 'Where have you flown to, my soul ? What can you obtain by it but tepidity ? Do you not know that God visits the recollected and avoids those who withdraw

[1] 'The habit of recollection is not to be gained by force of arms, but with calmness, which will enable you to practise it for a longer space of time' (*Castle*, M. ii ; also *Life*, ch. xi, 23.)

'It is very helpful to read a book of devotion in the vulgar tongue so as to learn how to collect the thoughts and to pray well vocally, thus little by little enticing the soul by coaxing and persuasion so that it may not take alarm. Be wary, for it deserted its Lover many years ago, and needs very careful management to induce it to return to its home. . . . The poor soul no longer understands itself and needs many stratagems to make it stay with its Bridegroom' (*Camino*, ch. xxvi, 9.)

from his heart? Do not loiter about the streets; if you wish to be the bride of the Most High, you must keep strict enclosure, for that is a sign of modesty.'

Such words addressed to the soul will make instruction sweet, as it should be to the pupil. Overlooking past distractions, the teacher should provide a remedy for the future, removing any cause of distraction; he should do this with all possible kindness, for nothing so incites others to carry out our wishes as love shown by us.

This practice of recollection is not attained by force but by management. Nothing is more tactful than love, which ought to be like the whip that sets the top spinning, and that not for a time but continuously. Our soul is a top, by nature inclined to fall down, but the whip of love can give it new strength if we correct it in this manner, as our Letter of the Alphabet bids us, for it is always defective and soon tires of toiling in the interior of the heart where he who watches over Israel should neither slumber nor sleep.

As regards what our Letter of the Alphabet says about continually correcting our soul, the most necessary condition for all spiritual exercises is perseverance; and the reason why we make little progress in them is that we make little use of them, for there is not one, however elementary, that will not benefit us greatly if used constantly. Consequently I consider that the best exercise for either you or me is the one of which we make the greatest use, for you will find that, as a rule, the advantage of the exercises lies in practising them.

As all should use this vigilance, I have said something to this effect in the first Letter of each Alphabet. In the first, much is said on the subject; in the second it is urged regarding the powers of the soul, and in the third it recurs constantly regarding the perseverance required for each exercise.

Men's exterior works being in themselves permanent, it would be a mistake to labour on them after they are finished. But the more perseveringly we work at our interior acts that refer to God, the better do they become. Even if we relinquish them, they remain an acquired habit. Yet to practise them constantly is better, for we do not merit by our habits but by our actions. It would be possible to acquire the habit of a virtue and yet to practise the opposite vice, and though we might still retain the good custom of acting virtuously, through our having acted in a way opposed to it, the custom would be worthless at the time in the sight of God. Then, since we merit by our deeds and not by

our habits, in order to increase our merit we must practise the virtue, for it does not suffice to have done well in the past: we must do well now. Therefore it is not enough for you to pray at one time and cease praying at another, for by omitting prayer you will lose the custom that you gained by prayer. Holy Scripture often bids us 'pray always' to teach the need of frequent prayer.

CHAPTER III

HOW WE ARE INDUCED TO PRAY ALWAYS

THAT you may know how we are induced and exhorted to pray always, read what the wise man says: 'Let nothing hinder thee from praying always, and be not afraid to be justified even to death.'[1] The saintly Tobias said to his son: 'All the days of thy life have God in thy mind,'[2] and David spoke of God as always present to him. The wise man also said: 'He that keepeth the law, multiplieth offerings.'[3] Our Lord taught us that we ought always to pray and not to faint.[4] S. Paul the Apostle wrote to the Thessalonians: 'Always rejoice. Pray without ceasing. In all things give thanks,'[5] and in his second epistle to them says: 'We pray always for you that our God would make you worthy of his vocation.'[6] He writes to Timothy: 'I will therefore that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands.'[7] Our Lord bade the Apostles, including all other men: 'Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times, that you may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that are to come and to stand before the son of man.'[8] S. Paul wrote to the Colossians: 'We give thanks to God . . . praying always for you.'[9] And our Lord, to set us an example, withdrew from his companions and spent the night in prayer.

It is told of the Apostles that after our Lord's ascension they persevered with our Lady in prayer, and the Church prayed without intermission for S. Peter when he was taken prisoner. S. Paul ordered the Romans to be 'instant,' that is, persevering, in prayer,[10]

[1] Ecclus. xviii, 22.
[2] Tob. iv, 6.
[3] Ecclus. xxxv, i. The Spanish gives prayer (*oracion*) instead of 'offerings.'
[4] S. Luke xviii, 1.
[5] 1 Thess. v, 16–18.
[6] 2 Thess. i, 11.
[7] 1 Tim. ii, 8.
[8] S. Luke xxi, 36. The Spanish gives 'the son of the virgin.'
[9] Col. i, 3.
[10] Rom. xii, 12.

and to the Philippians he said: 'Be nothing solicitous: but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God.'[1] The same Apostle wrote that widows should 'continue in supplications and prayers day and night.'[2] S. Peter bade married people treat one another with honour, that their prayers might not be hindered,[3] and S. James declared that 'the continual prayer of a righteous man availeth much.'[4] S. Paul exhorted the Philippians to pray at all times in the spirit, and advised that the just man should pray for his sins and withdraw from them, and his prayer would be heard.[5]

In these and countless other places that I do not remember for the moment, Holy Scripture exhorts us to continual and persevering prayer to God, who often defers an answer so that we may increase our prayers and gain greater merit in the eyes of his Majesty.

Some people, with their petty comments, take upon themselves to evade all the admonitions of Holy Scripture to pray always, and quote S. Augustine: 'He who does not cease to do good works, does not cease to pray.' But this does not apply exactly, nor is it understood by those who think it is a sufficient plea to offer their superiors, for S. Augustine is here comparing men who lead the active life with those who give themselves to a life of prayer. He tells the former that to continue their work is not to discontinue prayer in order to console them, for their good works, as it were, compensate for prayer. So that S. Augustine does not write this in behalf of those who pray, but of those engaged in active work, teaching them that if they wish to equal the others they must not cease from well-doing. This appears to be the truth, for when our Lord told Martha that Mary had chosen the better part, if Martha had answered that she who did not cease to work did not cease to pray, as she might have done, he could have replied that it was true; but that she prayed with more attention who was occupied with God alone than one who, like herself, was careful and troubled about many things. Martha was therefore not so perfect as though she had occupied herself solely with the supreme Good, who is needed by all since he is the End of all, as did her sister Mary, who, seated in perfect tranquillity at our Lord's feet, listened to his words with the ears of her soul.

What I maintain is that if he who unceasingly performs good works prays ceaselessly, yet his prayer is not so pure as that of one occupied with divine matters only; for attention divided among

[1] Phil. iv, 6. [2] 1 Tim. i, 5. [3] 1 Pet. v, 7.
[4] S. James, v, 16. [5] Phil. vi, 18.

many things gives less attention to each separately, so that he who devotes himself both to the active and contemplative life has to take from the one what he gives to the other.[1]

The other reason sometimes alleged to prove that a man cannot pray always is that as there are so many unavoidable needs connected with this life, and we are bound to help others, we must perforce give some time to the active life during which contemplation must cease. We all know well the many needs of humanity, for they trouble everybody.

If the undevout knew that if they wished they could pray and work at the same time, they would not frame excuses for neglecting God's counsels. Some work is too laborious for a man to keep his whole attention to prayer, but he can do so to a certain extent. If religious were what they should be, all their efforts would be directed to prayer, and they would give themselves to nothing else, for as our Father S. Francis says, all temporal things should minister to prayer, and the recollected should avoid whatever does not do so. The Saint admonishes his friars to work faithfully and devoutly, so that while eschewing sloth, they may not destroy the spirit of holy prayer and piety.

S. Francis thus exhorts his faithful sons to work and pray conjointly, as Jeremias writes: 'Let us lift up our hearts with our hands.'[2] Hands, according to the gloss, here means our works. He does this who prays interiorly during his exterior labour. Hence S. Isidore says: 'He lifts up his heart with his hands who helps his prayer by his actions.'

Undoubtedly a man sometimes prays better for being occupied meanwhile in some good work, and certain kinds of labour rather

[1] 'S. Martha was holy, though we are never told she was a contemplative. Would you not be content with resembling this blessed woman, who deserved to receive our Lord so often into her home, where she fed and served him, and where he ate at her table, and even, perhaps, off her own plate? If she had always been enraptured like the Magdalen, there would have been no one to offer food to this divine Guest. . . . Let not the nun who is called to the active life murmur at others who are absorbed in contemplation. . . . It does not follow, because all the nuns in this convent practise prayer, that they must all be contemplatives. Such an idea would greatly discourage those who do not understand that contemplation is a gift of God that is not necessary for salvation nor for earning our eternal reward, nor does anyone here require us to possess it. . . . In one way such souls are safer, for we cannot tell whether spiritual delights come from God or the devil: if they are not divine they are very dangerous, for Satan tries to excite pride by their means.' (*Camino*, ch. xvii; *Exclam.* v; *Castle*, M. vii, ch. i; *Life*, ch. xxii.)

[2] Thren. iii, 41.

further than impede prayer. These should be preferred by the devout. In confirmation of this, the gloss comments on the words of the Canticle 'The smell of thy garments, as the smell of frankincense'[1]: 'Because the bride prays by all her actions when she performs them well with the intention of attaining to God.' Hence it is written: 'Pray without ceasing.'[2]

There is no need of proof that we can pray while we work, for man being composed of soul and body, must consider his actions under two aspects: the one corporal and earthly, since he is made of clay; the other spiritual and divine, for he is a celestial spirit and the image of God, created by him alone.

That which more than any other blameless thing separates us most from God is sleep, during which our reason cannot act nor can we pray, but, as I began to explain in the last Letter of the Alphabet, occasionally people feel more devotion while they sleep than when awake. Sometimes divine grace is received better during slumber because men's senses are then more recollected, according to the words of a saint, but I do not think that anyone will believe this except those who can say from experience: 'I sleep, and my heart waketh.'[3]

According to Richard, the reason is that the watchfulness practised by such a man while awake deserved that devotion should be bestowed on him during sleep. This is so evident that it may be called incredulous to doubt it. For if the devil is so wicked as to set before your mind while you sleep your past evil deeds and pleasures, why should you not believe that God is so good that he will give you what you longed for in your waking moments? If you say it would not be prayer because sleep destroys free will, know that if my having given way to evil while I woke causes me to sin by the wrong done to me during slumber, so my having merited the grace gives me the right to say I pray while I slumber.

Bodily weakness is also an obstacle to prayer, though when the soul is in good health, prayer is not altogether prevented; in fact, some people can say with S. Paul: 'When I am weak, then am I powerful.'[4] I knew someone who prayed perfectly while suffering from a violent fever, though it wearied him extremely in other ways, and an old man who only spoke of what he had long learnt by experience said that it was possible both to suffer and to pray continually.

In opposition to this we hear the well-known saying: 'Brief prayer penetrates the heavens.' If this is merely contradictory of

[1] Cant. iv, 11
[2] 1 Thess. v, 17.
[3] Cant. v, 2.
[4] 2 Cor. xii, 19.

what we have been saying we need take no notice of it, but as, if understood in its proper sense, it is perfectly true, and as one truth cannot gainsay another, it can hold its place with the rest. If a brief prayer penetrates the heavens, no doubt a longer, more lasting prayer will possess greater power as in our Lord's parable in which the widow's importunity obtains what she wanted from the judge. Thus the short prayer penetrates the heavens, and the continuous one penetrates the nine choirs of angels and reaches the throne of God's Majesty, whence it does not return until all that it asked is granted. For it continues to appeal, as our Lord advised, like the Canaanite woman, the example of all who pray. And even Christ himself, to set us an example, chose to pray three times in the garden and at greater length the third time.

Prayer may also be called brief on account of the manner in which we speak, as our Lord counselled us, so that the brevity may consist rather in the style than in the time spent. Prayer being a raising of the soul to God, some souls may ascend by the ladder of meditation, others by affection and desire, but he will have the advantage who can rise with least trouble and in the quickest way, for he can travel more swiftly by it and remain longer in the wished-for attainment, which is union of the soul with God. The less delay there is in reaching this union, the better it is, and it is the more quickly obtained in proportion to our purity of heart and of not having sought help from any created thing.

CHAPTER IV

FURTHER PROOFS OF WHY WE SHOULD PRAY ALWAYS

As certain people, by artfully sought interpretations, presume to contradict the text that bids us pray always, we quote some glosses on the subject, so that objectors may confess that they do not *wish* to pray always, not that they *cannot*, which is a very different thing. To say that they do not wish to, shows tepidity, but by maintaining that they cannot, they put a good face on it to prove they are not to blame.

The gloss on S. Paul's words to the Ephesians bidding them ' pray at all times ' says : ' Pray at all times, not at certain hours ; the text enjoins this and blames those who content themselves with certain fixed hours for prayer.' The gloss explains ' pray without ceasing,' written to the Thessalonians as : ' Live in unison with and in desire of eternal blessings, for the just man never

ceases praying if he never ceases to be just : he prays always who always acts well, for his desire to do so is prayer ; and if his desire is ceaseless, so is his prayer.' The gloss on the words of S. Paul ' I pray always for you ' says : ' In order to avoid the danger of the day of judgement, we must pray always.' On the prayer made for S. Peter, the gloss comments : ' The continual prayer of a just man availeth much.' One of the conditions that render a prayer worthy of being heard is that it is continual. The Grand Chancellor of Paris remarks on our Lord's words that ' we ought always to pray and not to faint.' ' He always prays who keeps his eyes ever fixed on God and ever desires him with devout and humble affection.'

Nothing contrary to the text can be found in all these glosses, for there is nothing incongruous in changing prayer for desire, affection, and raising the eyes to God ; for these are prayer and desire for him, and the most perfect prayer is desire for God.

As to what is said above about the just man's never ceasing to pray, it either means that the just does not cease to pray unless he ceases to be just, or that it is proper to the just to pray always, and that the justice and goodness shown in the children of God which is a kind of image of him, has the efficacy of prayer in God's sight, just as the manifestation of the Son of God in his Father's presence is a continual prayer for us.

If other glosses explain the Scriptures in a different manner, they do so for the sake of the less perfect and to relieve them from the fear they might feel at so perfect a counsel as that of praying always. For no doubt to pray always is the most difficult thing in the world if we consider our instability of heart and how easily our attention wanders during an *Ave Maria*, besides the great weariness caused by long prayer and the injury it does to our head so that we cannot pray as much as we wish.

Considering these and other difficulties, it is clear that to pray always is on a par with death, and the most impossible order that could be given to us. But if we bear in mind that Holy Scripture is speaking to those who can do all things in God who strengthens them, we shall not say the task is difficult, for Christ who gives the counsel, gives the help needed to accomplish it, and all the more willingly when the counsel is more difficult because it concerns sublime things, for this gives greater glory to his Majesty.

I have known people who, though prayer was laborious to them at first, find nothing more delightful now or that suits them better. Devotion is never wanting to them, as divine grace is habitual, though they feel it more at one time than at others. Often when

their attention wanders to other matters, grace arouses them and makes them return to themselves. Yet they blame themselves for not having striven to pray always, knowing that with the help of God, which never fails us, they could have done so.

It follows from this that the life of religious should be a foretaste of eternal prayer, a perfect silence of the heart, a flame of charity which must burn for ever in their heart, and a desire for God which must never abate. Since the religious Orders were instituted principally for prayer, and though the active life must necessarily be included, contemplation should be their chief aim. Hence S. Bernard says: 'Mary is praised for having chosen the better part, for most certainly that is absolutely the life we should choose so far as lies with us, and we must endure the active life if enjoined by our superior.' What has been said proves how culpable are undevout religious, for they came to the monastery, which is a house of prayer, in order to pray.

It also shows how perverse and opposed to their profession are superiors who, instead of setting their subjects to continual application to prayer, occupy them with the business of the world, and this is the more blameable if such work is of little use. Would to God that all active superiors were like one I knew, who often did a great deal of manual labour in order to give his sons time for prayer and spiritual exercises. He knew by experience how sweet the Lord is, and wished them to learn it. He was aware that for this they must refrain from other work, since it is written that he who performs few exterior actions and labours will receive spiritual consolation.

CHAPTER V

THINGS THAT HELP US TO PRAY ALWAYS

If, brother, you wish to pray always and be attentive to your God, take the advice of this Letter of the Alphabet which bids you correct your soul constantly, persuading and drawing it at all times to prayer. For if you do this on your part, God, seeing the pains you take, will come and lift you to himself, giving you such grace that it will do the work you did before, and will be like a pillar that guides you, so that you have only to follow wherever it leads.[1]

[1] 'After much meditation, our Lord advances step by step to lay hold of the little bird and lay it in the nest where it may repose. He observed it fluttering for a long time, striving with all its might with the understanding and the will, to seek God and to please him; so now it is his pleasure to reward it even in this life' (*Life*, ch. xviii, 13).

By telling you always to correct your soul with love, this Letter means that you must always strive to be joyful and cheerful, for 'God loves a cheerful giver.' And though on our own part we can obtain joy by the purity of a good conscience, it is not such happiness as God infuses into recollected souls, which is so great that they cannot prevent its appearing outwardly. Some foolish people, who take the motes of the recollected for beams, call it dissipated and vain laughter, though it is really only the joy of the Holy Ghost in the hearts of the just.[1] This is proved by the devout words uttered by such people and by their rejoicings being directed to the praise of God who gave joy to their heart[2]—a joy so deep and manifest to those who feel it that they might well quote the words of the Gospel: 'The infant in my womb leaped for joy.'[3]

Sometimes the heart of those who receive this joy leaps within their breast, and they are filled with such perfect bliss that their strength fails them on account of the tumult surging within them. This joy is so supreme that all the misfortunes in the world could not deprive them of it; if a man were suffering from numerous scruples that grieved and distressed him, directly he began to feel this joy, he would think no more of them than if they were a little dust blown away by the wind.

When this joy dwells in the heart, it is felt in everything, so that he who possesses it rejoices in whatever happens. Wisdom speaks for such a person in the words: 'I rejoiced in all these (things): for this wisdom went before me.'[4]

Sometimes this joy causes a man so to lose all fear that though all the torments of hell are described to him and the rigours of the day of judgement, and the sins he had committed are recounted, he remains as unmoved in his joy as though he thought himself exempt and freed from all these things. Even if he tries to fear them he cannot, for the perfect charity that God has given him has cast out all fear.

Some souls feel this joy and know not whence it comes, but are astonished at such unaccustomed happiness. If they examine it, they see clearly that it comes from no human source, for it

[1] Rom. xiv, 17.

[2] 'Our Lord occasionally causes in the soul a certain jubilation and a strange and mysterious kind of prayer. Sometimes it lasts for a whole day, the soul is like one inebriated . . . and a person is rendered so forgetful of self and everything else that she can neither speak nor think of anything but praising God' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. vi).

[3] S. Luke i, 44.

[4] Wisdom vii, 12.

leads the heart to God[1] and is not connected with worldly delights which give pleasure in one way and grief in another. This joy ejects all sorrow and is so rooted in the heart as to seem part of man's being and to be born within him, so that no one but God can deprive him of it. I believe it was of this heavenly joy that the angel spoke to Tobias, saying : ' Joy be to thee always,'[2] and that Christ said : ' These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be filled.'[3]

I know of nothing more to be said on this point except that when you experience this joy you may recognize the work God has performed in you and remember the words of S. Paul : ' Grieve not the holy Spirit of God : whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and anger, and indignation and clamour, and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice.'[4]

According to these words, while you have this gift you must be careful to avoid whatever disturbs you in any way, and to keep yourself in holy peace. While you possess this joy in your soul, guard it from all anger and vices mentioned by the Apostle. If you grow remiss, you will succumb to temptations, and resisting the gift, will grieve the grace of the Holy Spirit that works in you. Therefore our Letter gives very salutary advice in bidding you correct the vagaries of your mind by love, without becoming angry or sad, for it is written that ' whatsoever shall befall the just man, it shall not make him sad.'[5] However, as there is much to be learnt about sadness, a thing that greatly affects recollection, I will say something on the matter.

CHAPTER VI

ON SADNESS

By having told you to preserve joy of spirit, I have warned you against worldly sadness. If you are wise, you will never feel grieved except when you have sinned against God or when you lack his grace. You must rejoice at everything else, conforming cheerfully to the will of God, without which not a leaf falls from a tree. Therefore the first thing to do when misfortunes occur is to cast away melancholy according to the counsel of the wise man :

[1] Speaking of supernatural joys, S. Teresa says : ' When these joys come from God they come laden with love and strength that aid the soul on its way and increase its good works and virtues ' (*Castle*, M. iii, ch. ii, 17).

[2] Tob. v, 11.

[3] S. John xv, 11.

[4] Eph. iv, 30, 31.

[5] Prov. xii, 21.

'Give not up thy soul to sadness, and afflict not thyself in thy own counsel. The joyfulness of the heart is the life of a man. . . . Drive away sadness far from thee. For sadness hath killed many, and there is no profit in it.'[1]

My experience regarding the practice of recollection is that people who are naturally melancholy make little progress, while the cheerful who direct their light-heartedness to God advance greatly ;[2] but the contrary is the case as regards devotion to the sacred Passion.

That cheerfulness is favourable to recollection appears from the words of the wise man : 'A cheerful and good heart is always feasting : for his banquets are prepared with diligence.'[3] The gloss comments on this that the heart is that of the just man and the feasts are the virtues that are never wanting and are combined with the interior feasts of the soul which are preserved by joy. And if they should be wanting, they are soon searched for and found by means of this joy of heart, for when grace is born in the soul it must perforce rejoice vehemently as at the birth of the true precursor of our Lord.

As regards the two things for which you ought to sorrow, the first is sin, for which you should grieve because it offends God. If this grief is the genuine contrition that God infuses and causes in the soul, it is a pain that seems to rend the heart and break it, or bursts forth in tears of greatest bitterness, with such anxiety and weariness that the sufferer almost faints at times, and cannot use his limbs freely. But the tongue is let loose and utters a thousand reproaches against its owner whose misdoings it confesses. The heart is entirely absorbed in the memory of its sin and of God, whom it has offended. So intense is its misery that no ordinary disaster can be compared with it. It so remains within the heart that it is very quickly and easily revived, and the mind concentrates itself upon the primary considerations of its guilt, and of God against whom its sin was committed.[4] This contrition,

[1] Ecclus. xxx, 22–25.

[2] S. Teresa teaches that the soul will be greatly helped by rejoicing in the contemplation of the works of God, his greatness, and the love he bears us (*Life*, ch. x).

[3] Ecclus. xxx, 27.

[4] 'Sorrow for sin increases in proportion to the divine grace received, and I believe will never quit us until we come to the land where nothing can grieve us any more. A soul so advanced' (as the sixth mansions) 'does not think of the punishment threatening its offences, but of its great ingratitude to him to whom it owes so much and who so justly deserves that it should serve him' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. vii).

when sent from God to the heart, is so deeply rooted in the soul that it does not ponder over its sin in order to excite deeper repentance, but begs God to punish the wrong done against him and realizes that no pain inflicted on it could equal its guilt. From all these things combined there is born in the depths of the soul a satisfaction caused by its pain, so that it never wishes to cease from grieving, and this satisfaction grows with its pain and leaves it with a hunger and longing for greater sorrow for its sin. This voluntary grief and pain so increased in a certain person that he cried his sins aloud and groaned deeply as he told of the profound contrition he felt for them.

This is the most genuine contrition, being described by Holy Scripture as ' deep as the sea,' for in that sea all sins encounter danger and are drowned so far as their guilt and punishment go, and as none of them remain alive, they are cast dead upon the shores of the lips by confession.

This is the sadness of which S. Paul speaks to the Corinthians : ' Now I am glad : not because you were made sorrowful ; but because you were made sorrowful unto penance. For you were made sorrowful according to God, that you might suffer damage by us in nothing. For the sorrow that is according to God worketh penance steadfast unto salvation : but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this self-same thing that you were made sorrowful according to God, how great carefulness it worketh in you : yea defence, yea indignation, yea fear, yea desire, yea zeal, yea revenge.'[1] The prophet Baruch says : ' Open thy eyes, and behold : for the dead that are in hell, whose spirit is taken away from their bowels, shall not give glory and justice to the Lord : but the soul that is sorrowful for the greatness of evil she hath done and goeth bowed down and feeble, and the eyes that fail, and the hungry soul giveth glory and justice to thee the Lord.'[2]

Much might be said about these words of the Apostle and prophet, but as contrition is not the subject we are treating of here, we will only say that if it were possible for men, it would be better for them to be without this sorrow by the removal of its cause, which is sin. But who is there who can exclaim with holy Job : ' Till I die I will not depart from my innocence. My justification, which I have begun to hold, I will not forsake : for my heart doth not reprehend me in all my life.'[3] I do not believe that there is anyone in the world who need not feel the sadness above described ; but if by chance there should be one, we might

[1] 2 Cor. vii, 9–11. [2] Baruch ii, 17–18.
[3] Job xxvii, 5.

say of him : ' Blessed is the man that hath not slipt by a word out of his mouth, and is not pricked with the remorse of sin.'[1]

The wise man makes special mention of sins of the tongue because there are many people who overcome all other faults and are overcome by their tongue, which defeats those who have defeated every other vice, and calls for continual effort from those who have rid themselves of all other obstacles in serving God.

The second reason why the recollected should feel sorrow is a want of devotion. I say the recollected, because those with dissipated minds do not feel the lack of it since they have never tasted devotion either wholly or partially. The keenest trial of the just is to witness how little those who give themselves to worldly pleasures long for God, because they have never tasted even a drop of the divine sweetness. The desire felt for it by the just and the cry of their souls is : ' O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, O Lord, which thou hast hidden for them that fear thee.'[2] To the unrecollected the Psalm says : ' O taste and see that the Lord is sweet.'[3] For if you tasted him you would long for his sweetness, not less than you do for earthly pleasures but far more.

The heart of the recollected should be filled either with joy and happiness because of the presence of devotion, or with sorrow and regret at its absence. We have said something of this joy. It only remains to speak of the sadness of the devout soul when it does not feel its usual grace and devotion. Although this sorrow is good because it is more connected with God than is any other grief, yet the soul would be better freed from it on condition that it was delivered from the absence of the Bridegroom that caused it. Although he was present with all the saints, I do not think there was one from whom he never departed or hid himself, for often though he is there, he hides himself.

That Christ withdrew from the Apostles, he himself bore witness, saying to them : ' Because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart.'[4] Those who love only one person and all else in him, are full of joy at his presence and of sorrow at his absence, therefore the Apostles were full of sadness even at hearing our Lord's farewell which called to mind his departure. If there was any saint from whom our Lord was never absent or hid himself, it might be said of him : ' Happy is he that hath no sadness of his mind.'[5]

[1] Ecclus. xiv, 1. [2] Ps. xxxi, 20. [3] Ps. xxxiii, 9. [4] S. John xvi, 6.
[5] Ecclus. xiv, 2. ' O my Joy ! Lord of all things and my God ! How long must I languish for thy presence ? What solace wilt thou

That this sorrow is more connected with God than any other kind is clear, because it comes from the absence of him whose presence causes the greatest joy the just can feel. The Psalm says of it : ' The light of thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us : thou hast given gladness in my heart.'[1] The human countenance, being corporeal, causes shadow, and shadow is wont to occasion fear, especially when we do not know the face that causes it, as happened to holy Job.[2] But God being incorporeal and his presence the source of light, causes no shadow that terrifies, but a delightful radiance that rejoices the heart. When this fails or is hidden, the devout soul at once becomes sad and discontented with self and all earthly pleasures. It feels an intense weariness and anxiety that leave it no repose in anything, nor can its countenance look bright. Remembering its bygone feelings and realizing their absence, it can take no rest, for its despondency makes it indifferent to all earthly joy.

This sadness differs according to the progress made by the soul. The farther advanced feel it more than others in an earlier stage, while those who have made no progress in any way do not feel it at all, for they do not miss it who have never had it. However, the case must be the same in spiritual as in material things, for as in the nature of corporeal things there is no void, so in spiritual nature there can be no soul wholly void of some such sadness.

It is known by the learned that nature, in its character of provider, though it may sometimes counteract itself in special cases, never for a moment leaves a vacuum on account of the universal harm that would ensue. Hence, if the air were destroyed, the earth and water would immediately rise to fill its place in order that there should be no void and that things joined and participating in one another should not be displaced, and a like participation is preserved in spiritual matters. Therefore God commands that ' no one shall appear with his hands empty before the Lord.'[3] But the foolish, misinterpreting this order, fill themselves with worldly riches and each in his own way increases his possessions, not reflecting that the earth and all that it holds are called vain and empty. Yet they try to fill their hands with these, thinking to

give to one who has so little earthly comfort, that she may find peace while absent from thee ? Oh tedious, oh painful, oh dying life ! What lonely solitude ; how hopeless is my case ! How long shall it endure ? What shall I do, my sovereign Lord ? Shall I choose not to desire thee ? ' (*Exclam.* vii.)

[1] Ps. iv, 7. [2] Job iv. [3] Deut. xvi, 16.

prevent a void by what is vanity—a thing that is impossible. The whole world cannot fill man's heart, as was seen in Alexander, because the world is empty of true riches. The heart must not appear empty before the Lord, who is as pleased with its sadness as with its joy and turns its sorrow into joy as he promised.[1] Indeed, grief at his absence pleases him best, for such sorrow shows our love in proportion to its depth, as was shown in the Magdalen, who wept as she kept lamenting: 'They have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid him.' Even the angels could not console her, for she did not grieve for their loss. When sorrow is genuine and impossible to assuage, it can only be consoled by the presence of him by whose absence it was caused. We see this in the Magdalen, who could not overcome her grief until she saw him for whom she longed. So, if your sorrow for having lost the grace you possessed is sincere, you will not rejoice until the Lord, who gives to all abundantly, returns it to you, at least equivalently.

CHAPTER VII

OF ANOTHER SACRED SORROW

BESIDES the sadness customary to the devout when they lack devotion there is another often felt by those who practise recollection. It is greater than that described, for it sometimes begins with heartfelt sighs and impels a man to be in solitude. He who suffers from it can find no kind of alleviation. It is very difficult to discover whence it comes, yet it fills the soul with gloom and enters the heart. Its wings seem to be black and it casts all things into mourning, within and without. It causes a kind of apathy and the sufferer would fain die at once. It brings with it a sort of terror and wonder and sometimes causes tears for which there is no reason. Some who experience it are wont to feel or see with the eyes of the soul a kind of shadow or mist or smoke that descends upon their head and terrifies them, for they know not what it is. They try to drive it away as an unsubstantial thing, saying that it is a phantom. This may happen by either day or night, for since it takes place principally within the soul, neither place nor light, nor the darkness of night affects it.

I consider that this intense and deeply rooted sadness is superior to the one above mentioned, taking into consideration the con-

[1] S. John xvi, 20.

dition of the person who experiences it. When you feel it during your recollection you must count it as a blessing, for it is usual with those who practise this way of prayer. You must yield your heart to it and take pleasure in it without any other consideration. But follow this advice : neither diminish nor add to it, but let it take its free course, for if you reject it you will reject much that is good, and if you try to increase it you will rob it of much of its value and diminish its benefits. Let it do its work ; you only have to leave it free to act. I think this must be what the wise man wished to feel when he said : 'The heart of the wise is where there is mourning.'[1] He does not say the wise man will seek this sadness, for it cannot be sought or found, but comes of its own accord, nor does he say that he will either increase or avoid it, or take any other course, but that he longs to be where it is, wishing for nothing but to be in its company while it lasts.

When these things descend upon your soul from above, having first prayed and cleansed your heart from mortal sin, force it not to fear or be dismayed, but behave as though you were in danger of death and trust in the Lord, who since he watches over his enemies will guard his friends still more tenderly. Therefore enlarge your heart, driving away fear and conforming your will to all that is sent you, believing that it will come from the hand of the Highest, who is so faithful a Friend that if he allows any evil to approach us, he will make us benefit by the temptation and not permit it to exceed our strength.

Things are often met with during recollection that require us to have more strength than Samson ; and this strength consists in our submitting to whatever happens as coming from God. All who keep his commandments should believe this, for he protects them as his own children and does not permit them to be deceived in spiritual matters by the enemy. Such was the case with Job : God would not allow his ghostly adversary to mislead him. As the Sage says : 'The strength of the upright is in the way of the Lord : and fear to them who work evil.'[2]

Nothing gives a man greater strength and confidence than walking in the way of the Lord and his commandments, for God keeps him safely by this road and those who travel by it are not deceived. Therefore God calls himself the Way that cannot err, the Truth that cannot lie, the spiritual Life of them that follow it. Those who sin fear and tremble and quake, but those who follow the Way of the Lord win strength to advance farther.

Although the difference between the two kinds of sadness is

[1] Eccles. vii, 5[a]. [2] Prov. x, 29.

very great, it is difficult to discern by the recollected who have not experienced it. Melancholy caused by lack of devotion is painful and wearisome ; it is as though one sought for gold and did not find it, but the sadness of the recollected is quiet, painless, and brings with it a kind of lethargy and attraction for solitude ; yet it is loving and devout, although its devotion is directed to no human object.

I have never read anything about this kind of sadness, which I believe is the highest of all. I mention it here for the consolation of those who attain to it, or rather, those who receive it, for God causes it in the soul without our fully understanding its origin.

There are three kinds of holy sadness proper to the recollected. The first, that of beginners, is caused by sorrow for having offended God ; the second, that of proficients, comes from their not having the sweet feeling of God's presence which they desire in abundance ; the third, the sadness of the perfect, is so secret that its source is uncertain, though I think it is a kind of spiritual favour which only God who gives it understands. The remedy for all these and for many other wants your heart will feel is the love that gets rid of all defects and is like oil that softly smoothes away roughness, and with this you must always rectify your soul so that it may remain with God.

FIFTEENTH TREATISE

SPEAKS OF CERTAIN IMPEDIMENTS TO RECOLLECTION, SAYING: 'QUIT ALL OBSTACLES, KEEPING YOUR EYES BENT ON THE GROUND'[1]

CHAPTER I

CONCENTRATION OF MIND REQUIRED

THIS mystery of recollection is so very great, excellent, and divine, that it helps whatever things are good and benefits them all, nor is there anything that can hide from its heat. It is like a sun that enlightens all places and is required for the generation of all that is good. For without recollection no one can do anything rightly; if the public notary ceases to attend to and recollect what he is writing, he will make many mis-statements, as will one who is reading aloud. Unless the carpenter considers what he is about, he will cut his hand; and whatever office a man fulfils, unless he recollects and attends to his work, it will be badly done. The more the painter concentrates his thoughts on the picture he is painting, the more perfect it will be; hence if he wishes to paint a joyful subject, he must be joyful himself, or if it is to be a mournful one, he will succeed better if he feels sad, for he is thus more concentrated on what he is doing, and is, in a way, transformed into it, for recollection is a kind of transformation into the thing we recollect.

As interior operations excel those that are exterior, they require greater recollection and transformation of ourselves. Hence those who wish to contemplate our Lord's Passion fittingly must withdraw their thoughts from all else, transferring them to the sufferings of Christ, as though they were present personally at the Mysteries upon which they meditate.

If a person wishes to investigate any mystery profoundly, he must concentrate himself entirely on it, avoiding all other interests as though he had nothing else to do or think about. He must employ his thoughts solely on this, and keep his mind bent on it. Solitude, and even darkness, will help him greatly to keep his

[1] The Spanish gives Q as Letter XV: *Quitar deve todo estorvo, hincando en terra los ojos.*

senses from wandering and concentrate his thoughts on the subject of his contemplation.

Although these things are true, various degrees of recollection are required for different subjects. Less is required for ordinary than for sublime matters. Consequently we can tell people who say that recollection was invented by the philosophers that it is none the worse for that, but rather the better, for they could not have been philosophers without it, since recollection is the gate of wisdom. We see that in corporeal and spiritual studies: the student who concentrates his mind the most is the cleverest, and silent men, disengaged from other things, become the most learned.

Although by means of recollection philosophers may have received some gift from God, it would have been of an inferior kind. Recollection is better suited, as a practice, to Christians than to others, for Christ our Redeemer said: 'Adore the Father in spirit and in truth.'[1] Recollection must be perfect and withdrawn from all created things. Christ abrogated the numerous ceremonies of the Law lest they should impede recollection, to which we should give ourselves more perfectly than did the Hebrews, having less to distract us on account of the brevity of the Evangelical Law, which Christ reduced to two commandments that virtually contain all the Law and the Prophets. We ought also to be more recollected because of the cessation of the various ceremonies and offerings and sacrifices that were enough to distract the minds of the most holy.

If the sybils, prophets, and soothsayers of the heathen, and the holy patriarchs and other men of old contemplated and revered the sacred Passion of our Lord, this redounded to the honour of the Passion. Christ was called 'the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world' because they contemplated him as dead, but holy men of the New Testament, who know more of the history of the Passion, with all its details, contemplate it far better. Therefore though recollection has been practised since the beginning of the world, it is now of a far higher and more perfect kind.

But you must consider that the greater or lesser perfection of recollection depends upon the object towards which it is directed and its degrees of goodness correspond to those of its subject. The most perfect is that concerned with God, for man should withdraw from all that is not God in order to approach and recollect him. Hence our Letter of the Alphabet says: 'Quit all obstacles, keeping your eyes bent on the ground.' Eyes are of two sorts: spiritual and bodily, and these words apply to both.

[1] S. John iv, 23.

CHAPTER II

OF TWO KINDS OF RECOLLECTION

If man could easily fix the eyes of his soul on God, there would be little need of the advice of this Letter, and he would say with the Psalmist: 'My eyes are ever towards the Lord.'[1] But those who have not eyes like the eagle's that look at the sun without blinking must bend the eyes of their body to the ground to allow those of the soul to recollect God. To make the meaning of this Letter clear, the recollected should know that in order to progress, they must practise two kinds of recollection; one general, the other special. The first consists in the control a man should always exercise over his heart, as he would on the reins of an unruly horse. Recollection implies a like constant guard over the heart to keep it at peace, closed, and free from human affairs, for the first stone to be laid in this edifice is a spiritual holiday in which our heart has no other work but to draw near to God.

Although superiors and busy persons cannot take this holiday so easily as simple, unlettered people who have no duty or responsibilities to disturb them, yet the former are not entirely exempt from contemplation, for if they are as keen and wise about spiritual as about material affairs, they can make some progress, although they cannot maintain general recollection and the continual vacancy of the heart so completely. This holiday is a moderation and serenity of the soul which is peaceful and at rest, and maintains constant modesty, discipline, and good order within it. This also needs outward recollection, for the one helps the other.

If you perform manual labour, you must not give up recollection, but must practise it outwardly and inwardly so far as possible, preserving it by a constant mortification which, by use, will so increase that you will grow stupid as regards your work and forget how to do it, for you will lose your former skill; and although sometimes you may find yourself perfectly useless as regards outside things and may seem to have lost all common sense so that you do not know how to light a candle or lay a fire, or even how to glean a little corn, so that you are obliged to ask others to do it for you, do not be surprised or give up recollection, for this is a state through which the soul passes and becomes capable in every way later on.

Special recollection is when you enter solitude to pray to the Lord devoutly in secret, entirely foregoing all other occupation in

[1] Ps. xxiv, 15.

order to give yourself to it without thought of any other thing. You should hold yourself as dead to all else and no longer concerned with it or it with you. Beg and command the rest to leave you as though they had never known you, saying : ' Depart from me ; I am not what you seek, nor do I want you now, nor you me. I have suffered enough from you at other times ; leave me alone now.'

For this special recollection, you must retire within your heart and withdraw from all created things for two hours ; one hour before and one after midday, in the most undisturbed time possible. If you can remain and pray for a longer space, so much the better. But even if you cannot take two hours for recollection, the superiors can do so. Good Christian rulers, the nobility, and rich men can practise both kinds of recollection. I except men of the world, for they have no part with Israel nor are they fit for recollection, except in hell, where they will be collected (*recogido*) into bundles as fuel to light the eternal fire. But rulers and nobles and rich men who live as Christians free from mortal sin can practise recollection when their time is free. Indeed, they have fewer human trials and needs than those that beset and trouble the poor. Though the former are charged with the care of their subjects and possessions, their charge is a light one, for it is in the hands of their subordinates and stewards, two or three hours a day sufficing for their own share of the work, and the rest of the time they can devote to God and recollection. The greater the opportunities they have for this, the stricter will be the account that God will ask of them. Then they will acknowledge the truth of my words which I should not have addressed to Christians in general if I had not seen some carry out my advice zealously. Of this God is my witness and he knows that I tell the truth, for I have seen prosperous and busy merchants who lived free from mortal sin and made recollection their chief aim make such progress in it that I was astonished, and offered thanks with all my heart to God who is no accepter of persons but of hearts led by his grace.

I have quoted merchants as an example in preference to other seculars because, seeing how those who seem to have the most difficulties and opposition have overcome them, it is easy to believe that others who are not so engaged in distracting affairs can perform this practice which, for a devout soul, ought to occupy the first place. Let religious examine themselves since the matter is so important for them, and let them realize that the heart is often as much taken up by some business that is not worth a *real* as if

its value were a thousand ducats, for all depends on our estimation of a thing, not on the thing itself.

If we value things rightly we ought to reckon corruptible gold and silver as sand in comparison with what is divine and incorruptible. We should lay up treasures in heaven, sending our heart after them to make it recollected, for according to S. Augustine the rich man who makes his possessions serve God and his soul as best he can, finds no difficulty in drawing near to God; for though he may own riches in abundance, his heart is attached not to them but to God.

These two kinds of recollection are very necessary if you wish to make progress in this way. Some people say that general, and others that special preparation for recollection is more necessary. It seems to me that you should be careful to make both, but first of all the general preparation for your special prayer is your ordinary behaviour at other times. In order to maintain your general recollection, remember the advice given you in this Letter of the Alphabet to remove all obstacles, especially by keeping your eyes cast down, for as they are the most frequented doors of our soul, they must be the most carefully guarded.

I do not tell you simply to lower your eyes, but to keep them fixed steadily on the ground, like men who are forgetful and as it were out of themselves, who stand immovable, wrapt in thought. Some people find it more easy to be recollected if they keep their eyes shut, but in order to avoid remark, it is better when in company to keep our gaze fixed on the ground, on some place where there is little to look at so that there may be less to stir our fancy and imagination. Thus, even in a crowd you may be deeply recollected by keeping your gaze bent, fixed on one place. The smaller and darker the place, the more limited your view will be and the less will your heart be distracted, according to what is written: 'Haughtiness of the eyes is the enlarging of the heart.'[1] 'They that fear the Lord will prepare their hearts, and in his sight will sanctify their souls.'[2]

He prepares his heart who tries to be constantly recollected and his heart enjoys much peace within him. Like a snail, he carries his home with him wherever he goes, and is collected inside his shell like a tortoise.[3] But when he is obliged to speak to anyone, he should still watch over his eyes, and keep them lowered, attending only to God and to his love, avoiding many distractions. Then it may be said of him: 'The king, that sitteth on the throne

[1] Prov. xxi, 4. [2] Ecclus. ii, 20.

[3] This was a very favourite comparison of S. Teresa's,

of judgement, scattereth away all evil with his look.'[1] A king, according to the dictionary, means a person who reigns : it stands for every man who controls his inclinations and desires in order the better to draw near God. He must sit on the throne of his judgement, which is prudence and a continual guard over himself, and with this fixed look scatter away all the evil that might come to him through what he saw. This implies a great deal, for the greatest hindrances to recollection enter through the eyes, and the soul is dissipated on outward things through their means.

You will see an example of this in our Redeemer, who on the cross bowed down his head to send his soul to his eternal Father. And so, if you wish to persevere on the cross of love, which is recollection, you must bow your head and fix your eyes on the ground, so that you can more freely and purely and unrestrainedly send your soul to the heavenly Father who dwells in your heart and wishes to be adored in spirit.

CHAPTER III

OF OTHER HINDRANCES THAT DISTRACT US

To keep our eyes fixed on the ground only frees us from hindrances that occur during the day. They are many ; each is like an arrow that flies swiftly to wound us, from which the prophet prayed to be delivered. But countless other obstacles impede recollection, which is too narrow a way for more than one thing and is needful for everyone. Therefore we must struggle the more eagerly to gain this path and advance on it, getting rid of obstacles with caution and prudence. This practice requires special discretion, for the discreet know how to behave, but the foolish, like drunkards, are soon disturbed, quickly losing what little sense they possessed and giving up recollection. You must consider these difficulties carefully, for they are many, and you will easily overcome the greatest, which are food and sleep.

As to the first, you must take what your constitution and need require, and must overcome your desire for food, for gluttony consists rather in affection for it than in what we eat, as shown by Esau, who sinned by greediness for coarse food through setting too high a value on it. The devil tried to tempt our Lord in this way ; yet did not ask him to turn the stones into capons but into bread, about which we may be greedy if we eat too eagerly or too much. Be careful on this head ; do not love eating, but take only what

[1] Prov. xx, 8.

food necessity and reason, not gluttony and appetite require. For there will come a time, if you persevere in recollection, when you will lose your wish for food and not taste the flavour of what you eat ; not because you are ill but because, for those who have relished spiritual things, all viands become insipid. Then, if you cannot eat and therefore require some light and appetizing food to sustain nature, do not seek for it anxiously, but commend the matter to God ; and believe me, nothing that you desire will be wanting if you take the course I have advised and your wishes have been moderate. I say this because I knew a poor person of the lower class who learnt it by experience, and I have found that God provides for such as being under his own most special charge.

As regards food, you have two things to consider ; its quality : whether it is dear or cheap, or choice or plain. You ought to prefer the cheapest and plainest unless your health or state requires better kinds, and you should choose what is most digestible. To overcome greediness quickly, think how short a time the taste of food lasts, and that it all has the same flavour when in the stomach. If you can avoid it, you must be careful not to eat anything that leaves a flavour in the mouth for some time, such as spices, raw onions, garlic, and pickles, for the harmfulness of such things at mealtimes suffices without their disturbing your prayer, when you ought to remember nothing corporal, but be like an angel of God.

By the same rule, do not carry perfumes about with you, lest your sense of smell should be aroused. If possible, a man should not come near either sweet or bad odours unless he is too mortified to notice them. But if there must be one or the other, a sweet smell is best, not because of the pleasure it gives, but because bad smells are apt to provoke pure-minded people to anger and so disturb them more.

Your meals should be as few as possible so long as your stomach does not suffer from having only one instead of two, for such abstinence is not pleasing to God, being against his advice who said : ' Take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness.'[1] Rinse your mouth whenever there is any good or bad taste in it and keep your teeth clean. If possible, never take your meal before the time comes and mix your wine with a great deal of water, for strong wine injures both body and soul with its heat. Be careful not to eat what makes you thirsty, for not only the food but the drink you take will injure your stomach, even though it is only water.

[1] S. Luke xxi, 34.

Cold food may be better for you than warm, unless it disagrees with you in other ways ; when one kind suits you, take no other, for in everything that affects the senses, we should avoid variety. No one can venture to decide as to the quantity of nourishment required, for we know ourselves better by daily experience than anyone else can. If you are careful, as a recollected person must be, in a few months you will know, within a couple of ounces more or less, what suits you. Excess of food makes a man heavy, too little weakens him, but with the right quantity he is ready for all his duties.

When after a meal you do not feel ready for religious duties, you have reason to suspect that it was not taken in a way pleasing to God. I say this to those who think that it is harmful to pray after eating ; if they said it was harmful after a heavy meal, they would be right to a certain extent. To say that it is harmful to pray after food contradicts our Lord's example, for after the Last Supper he prayed for a long while and bade the disciples do the same, blaming them for going to sleep, which after all is not so bad as talking and wandering about. Elias and S. John slept after they had eaten as a figure of contemplation which ought not to be harder for the recollected after food than before, since it is solely for that they eat.[1]

Finally, as regards quantity, let it be suitable to your personal requirements, and if there is any discrepancy, let there be little. But you will ask whether, if there is to be discrepancy in one way or the other, which will do the most harm, to eat a little too much or not enough ? I might answer that as the small amount would not matter there would be no harm in excess or default. But if you persist in asking which would be the least evil, I will leave the most Christian Gerson to decide. He says : ' According to physicians and theologians, excessive fasting is more injurious than a little superfluity.' This learned man has briefly answered with authority to your question, and very rightly too, for fasting often hinders spiritual work which is more vital, and weakens the head so that we cannot pray. Should you have exceeded a little in quantity, if you perform some extra work of merit you will gain in one way what you thought you had lost in another. But avoid people who make up for hearty eating by long sleep and not by more work ; also those who say a great deal about abstinence and

[1] ' At one time nuns have a mania for doing penances without either moderation or discretion : this lasts for a day or two and then the devil puts it into their head that penance makes them ill, so henceforth they never perform any more even when the Rule enjoins it, as they have found that it injures them ' (*Camino*, ch. x, 5).

wish to be thought mortified because they are loud in its praises, though the enormous quantity they eat is quite the reverse of abstinence, and they have no more regard for their stomach than if they did not possess the gift of reason.

I think the same advice applies to sleep, for, knowing what you require, you must have a fixed time for it, taking other circumstances into account. If sleep injures you, know that it is relaxation, not a necessity. Sometimes on one day a man breaks the rule he has kept for a year. No wonder, for even an iron clock goes wrong and the bow is not always bent. When such a disorder occurs, it must be quickly put a stop to, or much harm will be done.

CHAPTER IV

THAT TO SPEAK OF GRACE RECEIVED DISTURBS THE SOUL

It is a great obstacle and impediment to recollection if we make known to others the grace given by God in this exercise, especially when they have neither had experience in spiritual matters nor even know what they are. If told of revelations, they think they must have been dreams, or if we speak to them of the grace experienced by the heart, they believe it to have been some humour congealed there. Their gross minds drag everything to the ground, from which they cannot rise themselves. Therefore, if you are prudent, you will consider what a person is before you relate such things ; for if he is unfit three evil consequences may ensue.

Firstly, he will feel a contempt for the things you tell him, at all events for their having been granted to you whom he sees to be a man like the rest, and he does not know whether you love God better. Secondly, you may feel a certain amount of vainglory if he believes you ; and if not, you will feel depressed and judge him wrongly, holding him for undevout and incapable. Thirdly, I warn you that if you reveal such matters indiscreetly, you will be persecuted, as I have seen in the case of many people who have suffered much from those of whom they little expected it, simply because they told the truth about their feelings. You have an example of this in Joseph, who was persecuted by his own brothers for having related the revelations made to him in his dreams.[1]

You will often think you are serving God and showing charity

[1] S. Teresa forbade her nuns to discuss their prayer with one another. She describes the persecutions she endured when spiritual favours granted to her became known. See *Life*, ch. xix.

to your neighbour by speaking to him of spiritual things, but henceforth he will be your enemy, for his heart being unprepared for it, he will fancy that you are admonishing him because you see that he is dissolute, and that you spy upon his life. He will think you are a mischief-maker and avoid you. Supposing that this does not happen, some person may come to you with a book in which you recommended him to read something very fine and may even fly into a passion with you, saying that he understands and practises it quite as well as you do. Therefore you had better be silent and not speak about spiritual matters unless earnestly entreated to do so. And remember not to say all you know, but only what will be understood by your listeners, for what is not understood is not well received, and if unacceptable, it will neither be well for them nor you. Not only should the recollected close their eyes but their lips as well, and should not repeat in public what they have spoken of privately.

I know very well that in these days it will not be said that the children ask for bread and there is no one to give it, for everyone says with the satirist : ' I know all I need to know.' If someone of our own kind or state teaches us, we do not value what he says, thinking that as he is no better than us in material, neither does he surpass us in spiritual matters. In these days, people have forgotten the proverb : ' One Peter differs very much from another Peter, though all Peters are equal,' and there are very few preachers who will give a preference to others.

What shall we say of those who live a good life, for each thinks himself the most advanced and zealous ? I cannot understand how people can say there are no saints in the world nowadays, considering, if one person is praised for his sanctity, what a number come forward to show that they too are saints. In a monastery, we only have to praise one religious for his devotion and there is at once a contention among the rest as to who is considered the most devout. Each one thinks not only that he is good, but that his sanctity is the highest because it is less hypocritical, and they even look for other's imperfections to prove their case.

This being so, if you have received any favour not common to your brethren, speak of it to no one who does not swear not to reveal it in connection with you. Do not glory before any living man of some special grace you have received, for though you may help one person you will do harm to many, and more harm to yourself. In fact, I have seen such secret, crafty, malicious mischief result from this as would have seemed incredible, had not experience proved its truth.

Though the profit others may derive from such manifestations may incite you to relate them, let fear of the harm it may do make you ' put your mouth in the dust ' and be silent. Although Christ our Redeemer gave Holy Communion to Judas, he did not preach before him the divine sermon of the Last Supper, which by a singular privilege was left for S. John to write down, for he, being the most dearly loved among the Apostles, could best give an account of the discourse most full of love. Lest Judas should hear it, our Lord bade him do quickly what he was to do, so that he might depart. The traitor, by God's permission, had the power of selling all those who remained, for by selling the Shepherd he sold the sheep that followed him. Such is often the case in these times ; one man is like a mad dog that infects the rest.

The prophet David, keeping this in mind and being about to make manifest the secret marvels of God, says with his whole heart that it must be in the counsel and congregation of the just,[1] in which there is equal union of bodies and hearts.

CHAPTER V

OF THREE THINGS NECESSARY FOR CONTEMPLATION

THERE are three things chiefly requisite for quiet, recollected contemplation, besides many others which may be useful.

The first is the place, which must be fitting, proper, retired, healthy, devotional, suited for reverence, and quiet, for we know that the Jews were blamed for being in the streets, and the angel bade Lot to remove from the neighbourhood of Sodom and seek safety on the mountain ; Abraham was told to go out from his country, and from his kindred, and out of his father's house, and on another occasion was ordered to ' go into the land of vision '[2] to offer his son for a holocaust. Jacob said that the Lord was in the place where he had seen him and that it was ' no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven.'[3] We know that the pure dove[4] found no place to rest its feet until it returned to the ark ; and God bade the patriarch Jacob arise and go to Bethel, which means the house of God, and remain there with his family. God also commanded his people to leave Egypt and dwell with him, implying that he could dwell better with them in the Land of Promise. He also bade the holy prophet Moses

[1] Ps. cx, 1. [2] Gen. xxii, 2. [3] Gen. xxviii, 16, 17.

[4] S. Teresa often so spoke of the soul advanced in prayer in the fifth and sixth Mansions of the *Castle* (chs. ii, x, and xi).

to ascend the mountain to die, to show that the farther we withdraw from the world, the better can we die to it and live with God. Zabulon and Issachar were directed to sacrifice the victims of justice on the mount ;[1] David, fleeing from Saul, dwelt in the desert in places of safety and Semei incurred the sentence of death through leaving Jerusalem. The prophet David chose to be an abject in the house of his God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners,[2] and Isaias cries : ' Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths,'[3] implying that spiritual graces are received better in one place than in another.

It would take too long to prove from Holy Scripture that some places are more suitable than others for contemplation. It is enough to know that S. Antony and S. Antoninus[4] left their homes as being places unsuited for prayer. Our Lord went to the mountains and desert parts in order to pray more quietly. He did this, not on his own account, for no place, not even the agonizing cross, hindered his prayer, but to teach us by his example to seek for solitary spots, favourable for tears and silence, withdrawn from the tumults and excitement of the world.

The second thing that notably helps the spiritual life is good company, for ' it is not good for man to be alone,' with no one to encourage him in his good resolutions. Therefore the patriarch bade David visit his brothers and see whom they had with them. It is characteristic of virtuous men that they should live with others like themselves, unlike Saul who separated from the just and prudent David. Hence the latter said of Nabal's servants : ' We never molested them, nor was there aught missing to them of the flock at any time, all the while they were with us in Carmel.' The servants bore witness of this, saying : ' These men were very good to us, and gave us no trouble, neither did we ever lose any thing all the time that we conversed with them in the desert. They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.'[5]

They met with good company in the desert, for spiritual men seek for a place that suits their practice. They said that David's men had been very good to them, helping them to bear their

[1] Deut. xxxiii, 19. [2] Ps. lxxxiii, 11. [3] Isa. ii, 3.

[4] Osuna gives 'S. Antonio,' probably alluding to S. Antoninus, a martyr of the second century, honoured at Palentia. After living in solitude, he went to Rome, was ordained priest, and martyred in the South of France.

[5] 1 Kings xxv, 7, 15, 16.

troubles, according to Jeremias : ' It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.' Notice that the yoke is always borne by two, not by one, so that Jeremias means we should seek good companions from our childhood, as the wise man declares : ' It is better therefore that two should be together than one : for they have the advantage of their society : if one fall, he shall be supported by the other.' This applies not only to men but even to animals ; they work better and feel it less when together than alone. Holy companions help greatly to free us from the trials felt by the lonely in the spiritual life, for it is easier to pray for an hour with the devout than with the self-indulgent and talkative, who think the time will never come when they can go away, and show their lack of fervour by their want of outward reverence.

The second advantage of good companions, as the text quoted below declares, is that the devout do not annoy others nor try to molest them, which brings great peace of mind. Lest you should lose this peace by persistent annoyances, the wise man advises : ' Talk not much with a fool, and go not with him that hath no sense. Sand and salt and a mass of iron is easier to bear, than a man without sense, that is both foolish and wicked.'[1]

From what the wise man says and we see every day, the greatest trial felt by sensible, devout men while living with the foolish comes from their wrong opinions, wicked words and deeds, and above all their conviction that they are right, as well as their absurd, continual small talk which drives away everyone's devotion. It is better to be struck by the hand of a sensible man than blamed by the tongue of a bad one, which is the hardest thing in the world to bear, for when it ought to be severe it pities, and when it should pity it is harsh, saying a thousand malicious things in so coarse a manner that one can neither defend oneself nor cease to feel them.

The third thing for which the holy David was praised was that nothing belonging to his companions was missing. Christ gave thanks that nothing was lost which his Father had given him on account of his careful watch over them. Coloured materials stain others, and a man not only does not lose his virtues in good company, but acquires fresh ones. You will suffer by associating with the dissipated, but will forfeit nothing with the recollected. It is almost impossible neither to mount nor descend the ladder of virtue we all must climb,[2] and as the saying goes, ' with the wise, you will be wise.'

[1] Ecclus. xxii, 14, 18.

[2] ' You know that to stop is to go back—if you love, you will never be content to come to a stand-still ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iv, 13).

Although our Lord promised to come to *one* who loved him, yet to show how pleased he is that brethren should meet together he adds that he is ' in the midst of them.'[1] Here he speaks in the present tense, while to the one person alone he only promises to come in the future ; and though in each case his promise will be kept, this ' gathering together ' is far more advantageous. Our Lord thus teaches us that it is better for a righteous man to be with good companions than alone, although the latter is not harmful, for in the former case he has many occasions of improving which are wanting in the other. Hence the wise man says : ' Be continually with a holy man, whomsoever thou shalt know to observe the fear of God, whose soul is according to thy own soul.'[2]

As there are many kinds of sanctity, the wise man tells us to be with those whose soul is according to our own, and as there are various exercises we should associate with people who use the same as ourselves, for the sake of conformity. It is said of birds (that is, contemplatives), ' birds of a feather flock together.'

It is told of David that to the company who drew near him he was a strong wall of defence in the day of temptation and adversity ; that he gave them comfort and advice and the help of his prayers ; that he raised up those who fell, counselled those who rose up, and strengthened those who feared, doing the same in the day of consolation if it was needed, so that the company became an invincible wall. For as the wise man says : ' A brother that is helped by his brother, is like a strong city,'[3] that is, fortified by a thousand towers and walled in by a thousand defences. Hence S. Jerome writes : ' True charity is untarnished by rancour : the more numerous its companions, the stronger it grows.'

Then, brother, if you wish to feed your flock of holy desires on the pasture of devotion growing on Mount Carmel (recollection), join the holy companions who dwell there and will greatly help you.[4] Take warning by the citizens of Lais, who were easily conquered because no one aided them, as they had no friends and

[1] S. Matt. xviii, 20. [2] Ecclus. xxxvii, 15, 16.
[3] Prov. xviii, 19.
[4] ' I would advise those who give themselves to prayer, particularly at first, to form friendships and converse familiarly with others who are doing the same thing. It is a matter of the last importance, even if it leads only to helping one another by prayer : how much more, seeing that it has led to much greater gain ! . . . Moreover it is a most important matter for those souls that are not strong in virtue, for they have so many people, enemies as well as friends, to urge them the wrong way, that I do not see how this point is capable of exaggeration ' (*Life*, ch. vii, 33, 34).

their idols were useless and brought about their destruction.[1] If we live with the perverse, such will be our fate. I feel certain that a bad man perverts another more than a devil would. It is no wonder, for the one helps the other : the devil acts secretly, the wicked man acts openly, so their victim soon falls. If both his enemies were either visible or invisible, I think he would not succumb ; as it is, they are like wolves, who when one flees, leave another to continue the pursuit.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHIEF REQUISITE FOR PRAYER

THE third requisite for contemplation is the preparation and disposition of our will, which by the grace of God we must always keep in readiness like wax to be stamped with the seal.

Some people resemble honeycombs without the honey of sweetness, but in the recollected man this should never be wanting. He should strive to keep it ever in his heart and will, like the bride who said : ' My soul melted when he spoke.'[2] The will must be very soft and tender when it melts at a word, and even less than a word, but at simply having heard him speak without knowing what he said. For when the candle (the soul) contains in itself some heat that drives out from it the vapour of holy desire, it lights at once by the love of that divine Fire which is God, before the flame reaches it.

Therefore keep your will free from malice and adorned with loving tenderness of heart, for the peace of God is promised to men of good will, and we should always direct our will to him who is essentially good. Our whole spiritual progress consists in the disposition and preparation of our will, and this good will is the means by which divine grace is given us.[3] For whenever our

[1] Judges xviii. [2] Cant. v, 6.

[3] S. Teresa scored this passage. It contains the basis of her moral teaching. In the *Camino* she writes : ' My whole aim in writing this book has been to incite us to yield ourselves entirely to our Creator, to submit our will to his, and to detach ourselves from all created things. As you already understand how important this is, I will only explain why our good Master makes us say this petition ' [Thy will be done]. ' He well knows how we shall benefit by accomplishing the promise he made to his eternal Father. In a very short time we shall find ourselves at the end of our journey and shall drink of the living water of which I spoke. But unless we resign and conform our will entirely to the divine will, we shall never obtain that water. This is perfect contemplation ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxii, 8).

Lord is about to bestow grace on us, he says (at least equivalently) to our will what was said to Rebecca : ' Let us call the maid, and ask her will.'[1]

When to this heavenly Bridegroom, the Leader of virginity, we give the hand of our works to be wedded to him, he looks at our will, and gives himself to us according to that, as he cares little for words and the body rather hinders than helps these nuptials, for God only values the heart and the will.

The three things mentioned help the soul greatly to reach God peacefully ; but the third is the most essential, for in this case the words of the Psalm apply to it : ' Life is in his *good* will.'[2] A suitable place for prayer is a great advantage, but does not suffice, for Lucifer fell from heaven, Adam sinned in Paradise, and many sins were committed in the midst of God's house, nor did the dunghill prevent Job from being a saint. Good companions are a great help, but Judas lost his soul among the Apostles and Satan was among the angels. Nor did the want of good companions so harm the bride that she could not be called a lily among thorns. Many souls, having thoroughly rectified their will, which is the chief point, are among the wicked as a rose among thorns or a chestnut within its prickly shell, being free from any thorn of sin within themselves.

I say this so that if you meet with any hindrances to the contemplative life you may not think they suffice to excuse you from the practice, because you can maintain a good will of which no one can deprive you if you cast down your eyes and imitate Saul, who dissembled as though he heard not[3] when he was insulted, and cared nothing for it.[4]

It will also be a great help if you follow my advice and do not lightly believe that you cannot possibly practise recollection, though there may be many obstacles, for the will, which is a powerful queen, can overcome them all, aided by grace and a relish for

[1] Gen. xxiv, 57. [2] Ps. xxix, 6. [3] 1 Kings x, 27.

[4] ' It is of such immense advantage for us to cultivate the habit of recollection that you must not be surprised at my mentioning it very frequently. Do not be disturbed if you cannot succeed at first ; perhaps the devil may be filling your heart with repugnance and trouble because he sees what loss he would suffer by your acquiring the habit. Though he may try to persuade you that you could practise greater devotion in other ways, do not be dissuaded from this : our Lord thus tests your love for him. . . . If his Majesty sees that our works conform to our words, he will not fail to grant our prayers, to establish his kingdom within us, and to aid us with supernatural graces, such as the prayer of quiet, perfect contemplation, and the other favours with which God rewards our puny efforts ' (*Camino*, chs. xxxvi, xxxvii).

interior contemplation. Then rid yourself, O my soul, on your part of every hindrance and do all that is in your power, so that our Lord may hasten to perform his share, for he never fails ! He ever calls to you at the portal of your consent : it is for you to open your desire. You should approach the divine mercy as S. Thomas joined the company of the Apostles. The Bridegroom cries at midnight that he is coming, but the wise virgins should make ready their lamps, that is, their wills. The dove, which is the gift of the Holy Ghost, comes to the ark of your heart ; it is for you to put forth the hand of love and take it in. Remember that you must be ready to receive grace and take care to remove every obstacle that would impede it, closing your heart securely, keeping your eyes fixed on the ground, acknowledging your weakness and avoiding distractions.

SIXTEENTH TREATISE

SPEAKS OF LOVE, SAYING: 'REFER ALL THINGS TO LOVE AND DRAW LOVE FROM THEM'[1]

CHAPTER I

LOVE FOR GOD CAUSES HIM TO LOVE US

IT is written: 'The ransom of a man's life are his riches'[2] (the love and redemption of the soul), and the ransom of our soul is love by which you can redeem it from all evils that have held it captive, like the Magdalen whose great love was a ransom for her many sins. Its riches were so great that they redeemed her and set her at greater liberty than before she was made captive by her sins, to which it is believed she did not return. As her evil life in the past earned her the special name of 'a sinner' in that malicious city, for it did not know the time of her visitation, so her deep love for our Lord won her the title to a special mansion in the city of God given her as a testimony by her Beloved. He chose to praise her for this above all others, for there are few people in Holy Scripture so praised for great love by him who gave the grand commandment of love as the Magdalen, who redeemed her sins by love.

Let him who for his ransom does not receive many supernatural gifts be content with that of unlimited love alone, for if a man should offer God the penitence of the confessors, the purity of the virgins, the torments of the martyrs, the praise of the angels, the immense merits of the Blessed Virgin, and the whole sacred Passion of Jesus Christ—though he should offer all these for the redemption of his soul, he would not obtain it if he were wanting in love—but if he had love, the least drop of blood shed by Christ would suffice to redeem the most sinful soul that could be imagined. The Canticle of Canticles says of this: 'If a man should give all the substance of his house for love, he shall despise it as nothing.'[3] The house of the Christian is the Church in which

[1] For Letter XVI the Spanish gives: '*Referir y sacar deves de toda cosa el amor.*'

[2] Prov. xiii, 8.

[3] Cant. viii, 7.

are deposited the merits of the saints and Christ as its substance and riches. Were a man to give all these as substitutes for the love he lacked, they would avail nothing with God, who asks of man a reasonable love as the ransom due for his soul in union with the principal redemption given by Christ. This redemption consisted in love—a love surpassing all that we can imagine. Though that man should give great possessions to the poor and perform the most severe penances possible, let him reckon it as naught, for God will despise it as nothing if love is wanting.

Simple love for God has such power that it obtains pardon for sins, though he who feels it may not be thinking of them at the time, for if he remembered them, he would certainly repent and do penance for them. This is virtually included in true love for God, which is a sweet penance. So that those who say that the state of innocence and original justice might have been preserved, although our ancestors had sinned venially, declare that venial sins are purged by fervent love. Whether, even now, although sins may be mortal, they can be purged and forgiven solely on account of a great love for God, is debated by theologians ; for God overlooks men's sins not only because they grieve, but because they love. Therefore Isaias says : 'The Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion . . . by the spirit of judgement, and by the spirit of burning,'[1] alluding to souls stained by wrongdoing. The spirit of judgement is penance ; the spirit of burning is the inflamed fervour of charity, which also suffices to obtain pardon.

Love is the priceless treasure of the soul by which it can redeem its former ill behaviour and so enrich itself that it can buy not only the kingdom of heaven but the very King of heaven, who gives himself in exchange for love. Hence those who say that man by his natural powers can love God above all things, maintain that this love is the ultimate disposition by which to obtain his grace which follows immediately, infusing itself into the soul that has such love, and with his grace the Lord of love gives himself.

It would be audacious to think that God so values our love as to give himself in return for it, did he not declare it by his sacred promise told by S. John : 'If any one love me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him.'[2] If we consider these words well, it will seem that our Lord thought we should not be satisfied by his saying that if we loved him he would love us ; he therefore

[1] Isa. iv, 4. [2] S. John xiv, 23.

added that he would come to us, and this for nothing but to do our will, for it is written : ' He will do the will of them that fear him :[1] and he will hear their prayer.'[2] To show that this will not be only for a short time, he tells us that he will abide with us, for love has so high a value that it does not buy God merely for an hour or a year, but for the whole period during which we give it. But if we cease to give our love, things return to their former state, and our Lord, seeing that we repent of the purchase, goes away, taking his goods with him, so that as regards eternal life we lose all the profit we had gained.

Our Lord departs when we take back the love we had given him. He departs slowly and unwillingly, turning back to look at us by his holy inspirations, so that we may realize that it is we who have lost by it. If he takes with him what we had gained, it is to make us want to return and win it back together with himself. Our Lord is very generous, paying large interest and revenues to those with whom he dwells. In the souls that possess him by love he never ceases to produce actions deserving of eternal life, so that their love may increase and his sojourn be more assured as they love him better for realizing more clearly how immensely his companionship profits them.[3]

If an empty beehive had the power, the thing it should chiefly wish and strive for would be a swarm of bees, for then it would be cleaned, and provided with honey and wax so daintily deposited in the combs that they would be a wonder to behold. All this comes from the entrance of the swarm of bees which the hive should always keep within it for the sake of its value and beauty. This symbolizes the soul, which of itself is an empty hive, but if by love it disposes itself to receive God (who represents the swarm of bees by the assemblage of his infinite perfections), he will bring it many blessings, adding to the will much honey of grace, to the

[1] Speaking of the soul that has given itself entirely to God, S. Teresa writes : ' His friendship with her becomes so intimate that not only does he restore her will to her, but he gives her his own as well. For having made a close friend of her, God is pleased to take the command with her " by turns," as we may say, and just as she obeys his commands, so he in return does what she asks of him, only in a far more complete manner, for being almighty he can do what he wills, and he always wills to do this, while the poor soul cannot carry out all his wishes, however strong its desire may be ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxii, 11).

[2] Ps. cxliv, 19.

[3] ' We can neither do nor gain much for ourselves, but as it is all we can do, God is sure to help us, since his Son begs him to do so. . . . It is certain that he will never fail on his part, and oh, what a Paymaster he is, and how boundless are his rewards ! ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxvii.)

understanding the light-giving wax (knowledge of supernatural truths), and to the whole man a marvellous combination of virtues. All this we can win by love, which we may obtain from God according to the words of Christ: 'The Father himself loveth you: because you have loved me.'[1]

It is no less wonderful that God should love us than that we should love him, for our love is so base and vile that it is difficult to believe that it has the power of subjugating him. Besides this, the dignity of God is so sublime that it seems incongruous to think that he condescends to love such worms of the earth—he who has multitudes of angels in heaven whom he loves. But the Son of God, who is in the bosom of the Father and knows all his secrets, told us that his Father loved us because we loved him, implying that the petty price of our love is proportionate to the sovereign love of God by which he who in Holy Scripture is called Love gives himself to us.

God is so just that he corresponds exactly in this marvellous interchange to what we give him on our part. For as when we give him our love we give ourselves with it, so when God bestows his love, he wills to bestow himself together with it.

We know for certain that love is so powerful that it draws man with it as though it drew the heart from its place and set it beside its love. God's love being stronger still, draws him after it, so that our Lord might say: 'Where my love goes, there go I.' God being indivisible, he who loves the Son has with him the Father and the Holy Ghost, whose treasures, though they are within the Godhead, are also possessed by him who possesses God, who always brings his goods with him, and as the heavenly citizens dwell more in God than in themselves, doubtless they accompany him wherever love attracts him so as to keep near him.[2] Hence where God's love is, there is the whole of Paradise, and the love of God constitutes Paradise, for heaven would not be Paradise without it, nor, where true love of God exists, is there wanting all that is to be found in the empyrean heavens in a spiritual form, for God's love is that empyrean heaven itself, which is said to be the first and greatest heaven as love is the first and greatest of the commandments.

[1] S. John xvi, 27.

[2] 'Do you think, daughters, that God is alone when he comes to us? Does not his Son say, "Who art in heaven"? The courtiers of such a King do not leave him in solitude; they throng round him and pray for our welfare, for they are full of charity' (*Camino*, ch. xxviii, 12).

CHAPTER II

HOW LOVE IS THE EMPYREAN HEAVEN

If the empyrean heaven is very broad and spacious, it is said of love: 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad.'[1] This heaven is so vast that it includes all corporeal things of whatever kind and exceeds them all. It resembles love which practically includes all the virtues, outvalues them all, and surpasses them by its wonderful excellence. Hence S. Cyprian says: 'Truly this commandment of love includes all the Law and the prophets and is an epitome of the whole Scriptures in one sentence. It counsels the reason and nature; it proclaims the authority of thy word, O Lord! We have it from thy lips; it contains all religion in itself. This commandment of love is the first and the last, and includes them all; it is written in the book of life and furnishes a perpetual lesson to men and angels.'

Read this one sentence and consider what the Christian religion is: you will find that from this text flows all doctrine; that all ecclesiastical discipline springs from and turns on it, and that everything is vanity and nothingness that is not confirmed by love.

The empyrean heaven is the dwelling-place of the blessed: there the angels were created: from thence the devils were cast forth. Love, too, is specially kept for the just and good; there they receive a new being from grace, as a new heart is created within them by love in which they dwell as do the angels in heaven, for their spirit is like a burning flame that by nature is inclined to rise upwards in order to be with their beloved. The devils, that is, sinners, fall swiftly like lightning, being thrust down from heaven (signifying the love of God) in their sinfulness to the upper hell, that is their condemnation to everlasting torments in which they sink to the depths of the wrath of God. Thence, unless divine love delivers them, they will fall into the pit of hell from which there is no redemption.

As the empyrean heaven is said to influence the other heavens, so does divine love dominate the virtues, making its heavenly influence marvellously felt. By its means all the moral virtues relating to the love of God and our neighbour are made theological by the informative charity it infuses into them. Consequently, from human virtues, they become divine, their imperfection changes to perfection; they were dead and become living; they

[1] Ps. cxviii, 96.

were only moral but now become meritorious, and what was unfruitful is given a fruitfulness exceeding human capacity. Therefore it can rightly be said that charitable love renders human actions angelical, giving them a marvellous superiority and perfection. The Apostle says of this : ' Charity is patient, is kind . . . rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth : beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things.'[1] S. Paul here shows that the charitable love of which we speak draws to itself all the other virtues, making them, as it were, one of its own family.

Hence, though it is patience and fortitude that suffer all things, the text says that it is love which does so. We shall find in Holy Scripture that love appropriates the name of other virtues, which shows that it has endowed them with wonderful dignity, grafting them upon itself and so making them theological. Therefore we call the just man's alms charity, and say that chastity is pure love, meekness is benignant love, zeal is fervent love, because it is the office of charitable love to order all the virtues to their final end, that they may become theological through a kind of participation they receive in charity.

Let us found ourselves, then, brother, in love ; root ourselves in it like trees, build ourselves on it as a firm foundation founded on love for God which makes us his mansion and his temple in which he dwells ; let us, rooted in love for our neighbour which makes us fruitful, give forth leaves of help and fruit of sustenance.[2]

Those who are thus founded and rooted can, to a certain extent, understand what is the length and breadth and depth and height of love. Its breadth extends to our enemies ; its length perseveres to the end ; its height makes it all powerful ; and its depth makes us attribute nothing to ourselves but all to the love God bears for us. This is more excellent than the empyrean heavens, for if, for the sake of clarity, the latter are described as an unfinished sketch of the glory to be enjoyed by the bodies of the saints, eternal glory has already begun in souls by love ; and this not only accidental but essential glory. For if we consider, we shall find in love, as in a miniature Paradise, vision, tension, fruition, agility, impassibility, clarity, and subtilty.

[1] 1 Cor. xiii, 4, 6, 7.

[2] Like S. Teresa, Fray Osuna ever keeps the second commandment before his reader's eyes.

CHAPTER III

LOVE COMPARED TO PARADISE

THE glory of the saints consists in these seven things which we shall find have made a beginning in love. As regards the first, love perceives the hidden secret, and even searches into 'the deep things of God,' as S. Paul declares.[1] Gerson says that no gaze is more penetrating than that of love, nor more acute in penetrating to the depths of the heart, and as the Canticle of Canticles reveals, it is by this that the bride and Bridegroom desire to see one another.[2]

Evidently love possesses tension, for the bride boldly declares: 'I held him: and I will not let him go.' On these words the gloss comments: 'The more promptly a soul seeks God with true reverence, the sooner does it find him; and the greater its eagerness in searching for him, the more ardently does it clasp him when found.'

There are no arms so strong as those of love, not only to embrace but to overcome, so that it might be said to love rather than to Israel: 'If thou hast been strong against God, how much more shalt thou prevail against men?'[3] Love was 'strong against God,' for it cast him down from heaven to earth, made him man, and meek as a lamb in his Passion; for the nails would not have held him unless love that is strong as death had done so—and it is stronger, for it made the immortal die and slew our death.

Moreover, in this Paradise of love there is fruition, which means that a man should strive for something for its own sake and take it to himself as its final aim. This is done by our will, by means of the freedom with which it rejoices in God our Lord. Hence love alone, which comes to God with no outside intervention, can rightly say: 'Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever. . . . It is good for me to adhere to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God.'[4]

Here love declares that it puts its hope in God, for, as the Apostle says, 'charity hopeth all things.'

The chief characteristic of the paradise of love is agility in performing both interior and exterior good works; for he who loves finds nothing burdensome or tiring, and runs swiftly on the way of the divine commandments. This agility comes from the impetus of ardent longing that rises instantaneously in the heart and

[1] 1 Cor. ii, 10.
[2] Cant. iii.
[3] Gen. xxxii, 28.
[4] Ps. lxxii, 26, 28

is the chief motive for the actions of those who love, making them look upon their future duties as already accomplished. Richard comments on this text: 'Eat, O friends, and drink . . . my dearly beloved.'[1] 'Those who eat keep their food for some little time under their teeth, but they swallow their drink quickly. Hence souls new to love invite one another to eat, for they find some difficulty in loving, whereas the "dearly beloved" (proficients) ask each other to drink, which is quickly done, for their love is very agile and delightful.[2] Though they have served for many years, it seems to them but a few days on account of the greatness of their love. This love makes a better worker than the love that waits to be bidden to labour.'

Love is so agile that those who love might be said not to be under the law: not because the law does not bind them, but because the burden of the Lord is so light and his yoke is so sweet that being aided by love, they feel no weight; and as David says, God does but feign that his commands are hard, for they are greatly to be loved.

Love labours so well that it gains by all the pains it offers by rejoicing in and welcoming them, as Richard says: 'O grand virtue of charity that counts the things that are not with the things that are! O strong virtue, which, though despoiling no one, dost carry off all things! Thou dost make all things thine yet takest no man's goods from him; by loving what is good in others thou dost make it thine; and though it may be that thou dost perform a good work or love some one in vain, yet nothing can resist thee and all profits thee.'

[1] Cant. v, 1.

[2] S. Teresa uses this simile in speaking of beginners, the proficient, and the perfect. She says of perfect contemplation: 'How is it that when our Lord begins to bestow upon a soul a grace so great as this, that it is not, as it ought to be, perfect at once?' She considers that this grace may be likened 'to a certain food of which many persons partake: they who eat little retain the savour for a moment; they who eat more are nourished by it, but those who eat much receive life and strength. The soul may eat so abundantly of this food of life as to have no pleasure in any other food' (*Life*, ch. xxii, 24). 'The proficient resembles a man who requires no food, for his appetite is satisfied . . . yet he is not so full as to refuse to eat if he saw tempting food. . . . The soul longs to have a deeper joy in being with God—that is what it seeks' (*Life*, ch. xvii, 6). The symbol of the infant at its mother's breast, drinking of its own accord in the prayer of quiet, having the milk pressed into its mouth in that of union, is found repeatedly in the Saint's works. The soul thirsts for the living water promised to the Samaritan, and is fashioned like a vase by its maker to receive the quantity he desires to pour into it (*Camino*, ch. xix).

Love is also impassible, for patient charity bears all things in silence, and when genuine, weighs with equal balance the sweet and bitter, holding both adversity and prosperity as signal favours. For if we love, we must look not at what our Lord gives us, but at the love with which he gives, which is unchangeable. Hence in all things we shall find nothing but love which is the chief joy of lovers. Hence it may be said that if our love suffers without complaining (though not without feeling) it will, in a certain manner, be impassible. Even feeling is tempered greatly by love, so that, as a Doctor of the Church says, the love of God may so increase in us that we do not feel death ; this is believed to have been the case with our Lady and S. John.

Love is impassible where there is love for suffering, as clearly we cannot look upon what we love as a burden. To this state the words of the wise man apply : ' They drew me and I felt not.'[1]

Love is also called impassible because it effaces all the sufferings and injuries we undergo from others, enduring them at our own cost so far as possible, using them as a means of paying our debts, for as ' charity hopeth all things,' we hope to make satisfaction in the next life by what we suffer here, as in fact we shall. Hence as the Apostle says : ' All things work together for good for those who love God,' who refer all things to love which mitigates and softens what may be hard.

We may also say that love is impassible because, as S. Bernard teaches, one who loves finds nothing grievous.

The chief thing in this Paradise of love is brightness, for its light is the Lamb, of whose substance, which is the interior Divinity, is made a resplendent candle in the Paradise of love. Love of the world is blind, but love for our Lord has great enlightenment, for as he is our true Friend, he at once tells us of what evil he sees in us, lest we should be confounded through omitting to amend it, for the wise man says : ' Ye that fear the Lord love him, and your hearts shall be enlightened.'[2] Since love for God arises in the heart, that must be enlightened before the exterior man : for hypocrites first make bright what is outside, but the servants of God begin with what is within, for hypocrites love God in appearance but in their heart care only for themselves. True love concentrates its efforts on the heart, as the dwelling-place in which God is to abide, who dwells in light inaccessible, unknown to all except those who love ; therefore it is said of them : ' Let them that love thee shine, as the sun shineth in his rising.'[3] For the brightness of God that surrounds those

[1] Prov xxiii, 35. [2] Ecclus. ii, 10. [3] Judges v, 31.

who love him, giving them at first self-knowledge, is compared to the brilliance of the sunrise. Love is not content with interior clarity alone, but illuminates, making the chaste generation beautiful with glory. On this S. Chrysostom comments: 'Nothing illuminates the life like love.'

The last gift in this Paradise of love is subtlety, which successfully penetrates and overcomes whatever hinders it. For the office of love being to unite the lovers, sometimes it raises us to the Beloved by means of the gift of subtlety and at others draws him swiftly to us. Love knows that nothing can hinder it, for as S. Jerome says, it does not give way when it meets with difficulties, being sure of finding what it seeks wherever it may be by means of its subtlety. The wise man declares that the spirit of understanding (which is love) is subtle, and the gloss states that its subtlety is unsurpassed, so that, as another gloss explains, 'it reacheth everywhere by reason of its purity, passing beyond all the other gifts until it reaches the Giver, God himself, in whose arms it reposes.'[1]

Since love is so excellent, this Letter of the Alphabet may well bid us 'refer all things to love and draw love from them.'[2]

[1] Wisdom viii, 23, 24.

[2] In her description of the highest state of love attainable in this world, to be found in the seventh Mansions of the *Castle*, S. Teresa includes all these gifts. She says that the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, which we hold by faith, 'the soul now, so to speak, understands by sight, though it beholds it neither by the eyes of the body nor of the soul. All the Three Persons here communicate themselves to the soul: speak to it, and make it understand the words of our Lord in the Gospel that he and the Father and the Holy Ghost will come and abide with the soul that loves him and keeps his commandments.' Besides this gift of vision, such a soul has that of tension, for 'although not always seen in so clear a light, yet whenever she reflects on it, she feels the Companionship of the Blessed Trinity, and feels confident, as she may, that God will never so fail her as to allow her to lose this favour.' The soul enjoys fruition, for from 'the bosom of the Divinity, where God seems ever to hold this soul fast clasped, flow streams of milk that solace the servants of the Castle. The soul never moves from this centre, nor loses the peace he can give it who gave it to the Apostles when they were assembled together.' This includes impassibility, for the centre of the soul continually enjoys this peace, though in the other Mansions there are still times of struggle and suffering, though, as a rule, peace is not lost by them. 'It is content to suffer and welcomes persecutions. As for agility, the soul's former longings for God's presence are changed for as fervent a desire of serving him, of causing him to be praised, and of helping others to the utmost of its power.' Its clarity comes from the Light of lights that dwells within it and shows its subtlety by emptying itself 'of all that belongs to the creature, depriving itself of it for the love of God, and the same Lord fills it with himself.'

CHAPTER IV

BEGINS TO EXPLAIN THIS LETTER OF THE ALPHABET

SINCE this exercise is founded on love for God, without which we cannot entirely recollect ourselves, we must direct all our efforts to increasing this love in order that we may easily not only recollect ourselves, but enclose ourselves in God. The soul's attention is not distracted by contemplating creatures in order to love God in all of them, for it is rather contemplating God in them than looking at the creatures themselves. This is done not so much by many thoughts as by many affections and deep gratitude to God for every little thing that he created, since he made it in order that he might be praised and glorified in it ; and this praise and glory is naught else but love. Then, O my soul, adore, bless, extol, confess, glorify, honour, praise, laud, reverence, obey, and magnify thy God and Lord when thou dost bless him for being so good and worthy of all praise. Do this for each and everything he has created, representing them before him rather by your affections and the love of your will than by your intellect. In this way you will follow the advice of this Letter of the Alphabet of referring all things that you see to the first principle from whom they came and to the manner in which they came, which was almighty love. It cannot injure you to see and love God in everything you behold, looking on it as a gift from his hand, for if a friend made you several presents, you would love him for each when you saw it, referring it to him and deriving love from it with which to thank him. Even this does not suffice as regards men, for as our benefactors need us to help them in other ways, our obligation of affection for them diminishes as we repay them with other gifts or services day by day.

This is not the case as regards our God, for he has no need of us nor can we give him anything that we have not first received from him, so that our obligation of loving him does not diminish but increases daily. Only by love, and that not without the help of God, can we repay him for the continual mercies he never ceases bestowing, so that we must needs seek some way by which to multiply our thanksgivings.

Every gift bestowed on us by our Lord God comes accompanied by love, which is given with all his boons and is the principle of them all, so that we are not only bound to gratitude by his favours, but also by the love given us with them, which is of more worth than all the rest. Therefore as our Letter bids, you must refer

all things to love and draw love from them, remembering each as a separate favour to which we must respond by special love.

If at the market they will not sell you many goods for one sum, but you have to pay a separate price for each, how much more should you render to your Lord God a special love for each of his gifts? If you possessed great love, you might, to a certain extent, forget these gifts themselves and only love the love with which God gives them, as it is so precious that it ought to suffice to constrain us to constant charity. But since our love is almost extinguished, let us pile on it the wood of his mercies to make it burn, looking on them as most helpful aids to kindle our love for him who bestowed them, for as S. Bernard says, love becomes perfect when the gift is loved for the donor's sake, not for itself.

I advise you to refer at once to the love of God in every mystery and work of his, not thinking so much of the thing itself as of the love from which it proceeds. You will understand this better if you notice how, when our enemy does us any injury, we think more of his malice than of the wrong done to us; on the contrary we value the services rendered us by the poor who love us on account of the affection shown by them. We ought to look upon God's favours in the same light, like him who said: 'Behold what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God.'[1]

By our efforts, with the use of suitable exercises, we can love and bless God for each thing that he created, making of creation a ladder by which to mount to love for the Lord, rejoicing in and thanking our Lord for every little herb he has made and endowed with special qualities. We must delight in this with all our heart, and desire to give the infinite glory due to God for showing in this way his boundless power and wisdom and bounty. This must make us thank him, and we must heartily wish that what is due should be rendered to him, namely, love and such a fervent desire that he may possess all that he already has that, if he had it not, we would give it to him if we could. And we so long that this should be his that, forgetting it has always been so, we only remember and rejoice that he has it now.

Although we can love God in this manner almost at every moment and merit great glory for it each time (for when the will is rightly disposed it can in an instant produce love that deserves great grace and glory according to the divine law), yet there is still another way of loving God in all things. This can hardly be explained in human language, yet it can be felt by the heart

[1] 1 S. John iii, 1.

cherished by God, which with great fervour and restless ardour produces with all its strength a most glowing love, like a living fountain that surges and throws its waters on high.

This is a sublime and heavenly state, reached only by those who in all things hear God ask them whether they love him, and who feel that he so yearns for and desires our love that he seems as though he would die of longing. Such souls realize that he created all things for this end and asks no other payment for them but love ; that he feeds on nothing but love, for the sake of which he forgives all sins, however great, and forgets them as though they had never been, solely to make those who were his enemies love him without delay. He begs them to accept his pardon and receive it, so that he may not remain unloved : he never ceases granting favours that he may never cease to win the love which seems the only thing that can abate the infinite flame that continually burns within him, so that he may, as it were, begin anew to love us, as though our love were holy water that heated the eternal furnace of his charity.

In order to attain somewhat to this sublime love that God gives, with which his closest friends love him, we must set the whole of what little love we have on him alone that he may the sooner transform us by his holy love. The advice given in this Letter of the Alphabet greatly conduces to this. You must know that, according to philosophy, a virtue, when unified and compacted in itself, is stronger than when divided and disconnected. This is shown in the fortitude of the Apostles, which was so great that at the Last Supper each declared he would die with our Lord ; but when they all took flight separately, their fortitude broke down.

The virtue or force of creatures lies in their love, for your virtue is as great as your love and no greater. God will not give you a *blanca* for anything else you possess if love is lacking, though the whole world may be yours, for it is written : ' Better is one that feareth God, than a thousand ungodly children.'[1] S. Bernard says of this : ' The measure of a soul is estimated by the amount of charity it contains : it is great if it has much charity and narrow if it has little, and a soul that has none is nothingness, for as the Apostle writes : " If I have not charity, I am nothing." '[2] Since charity is the virtue in us that has value, and the divine commandment bids us love God with all our strength, though our affections wander among human interests, let us withdraw and recall them, presenting them to God in payment of the debt we owe him.

[1] Ecclus. xvi, 3. [2] 1 Cor. xiii, 2.

CHAPTER V

A FURTHER EXPLANATION OF THIS LETTER OF THE ALPHABET

He will follow the advice of this Letter adequately whose love for other things is prompted by love for their Lord, and who aims at avoiding all affection for what does not conduce to it. He draws love for God from all things who compares love to all created things. He contemplates love as the spiritual and blessed earth that sustains us, by the fruit of which we live ; or again, as the water that refreshes us and destroys the thirsts of our desires, breeding holy thoughts that are like little fishes. It is the air that gives us the breath of life and helps us to fly to God ; and the fire in which dwells the salamander of charity that dies on leaving it.

O blessed love, the anchor of our hope, who dost make us fast in God as though we were safe in port while we are in the tempestuous sea of this life ! Thou art the pastoral staff that defends us against the infernal wolves so that we pass safely through the dangers of this life, and upholds us in old age and weakness. Thou dost communicate to us the Holy Ghost with all his gifts and cause him to enter our soul. Thou art a gift involved in the other gifts, for thou wert the first to be bestowed by God. Thou art the morning star amid the clouds of our mortal flesh, for thou art more highly valued than any other services of ours. Thou art fire sent from heaven to kindle hearts sacrificed to God : the taste by which we begin to relish heavenly things : the fulfilment of the law, satisfying both God and man. Thou art the sweet yoke of the Lord, a burden that rather refreshes than weighs us down. It is thou alone that dost make us most dear to God, though without thee we are nothing. Thou art the pool of Siloe in which all our offerings must be washed to take away the stains from our good works : the precious death of the saints which makes them die in the Lord, which is everlasting life, for by this means we rise other than we were before, like the phœnix that dies in the flames in order to be reborn.[1] Thou art the whitest of snow that

[1] ' In one sort of rapture the soul, although perhaps not engaged in prayer at the time, is struck by some word of God that it either remembers or hears. His Majesty, touched with pity by what he has seen it suffer for so long past in its longing for him, appears to increase the spark I described in the interior of the spirit until it entirely inflames the soul which rises with new life like a phœnix from the flames ' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. iv, 3).

' I was amazed at this fire which seems to spring out of the true love

falls on the lofty mountains (contemplatives), to cool the carnal passions that impair them. Thou art the oil of gladness by which God's Christians are anointed, healing the wounds they receive ; the general pardon that gives plenary absolution to all the sinners with whom thou dost abide ; thou didst pardon the Apostles both in the past and future, preserving them by grace from committing further mortal sins. Thou art the peace that pacifies the strife of the sons of Israel with God. Thou art the root of Jesse, whence spring all the goods implanted by thee in the soil of a good heart, and the redemption of the human race, for it is written that the Son of God redeemed us in his love. Thou art the slumber of wondrous contemplation which gives us for pillow the breast of God, and makes the soul the more alert in proportion to the depth of the slumber of the body, causing great peace by holy thoughts. And thou art the harmony of the heavens that sleep so that God may come silently. Thou art the beautiful tunic reaching to the feet that shelters us from the cold, covering our nakedness and wonderfully adorning us, not allowing thyself to be divided, for charity is not lost piece by piece but all at once. Thou art the way to the Lord, and must be directed to him, as S. John says, in order that he may come to us through thee as by a descending ladder. Thou art the zeal that, to prepare us for God's dwelling-place, dost first devour and destroy in us all that is opposed in him, taking for thine own the inn where he is to dwell. This thou dost empty by filling it, for thou dost occupy no space, but there is more room for God wherever thou dost dwell, for thou dost rather dilate than occupy.

The explanation of this Letter of the Alphabet concludes by bidding you contemplate all things with the intention of drawing love for God from them. The love each thing bears for itself preserves it, but since man has a nobler being than have inferior things, he needs a more noble love than his own to preserve him, and for this you must seek the love of God, who has preserved hitherto, and will preserve throughout eternity, the order kept in heaven, and he will establish this order on earth when we are controlled by this love.

Besides this, you should derive love from all God's treatment of you, from your predestination until your entrance into his glory,

of God. . . . It appears to burn up the old man, with all his faults, his lukewarmness and misery ; so that it is like the phœnix of which I have read that it comes forth, after being burnt out of its ashes into a new life. Thus it is with the soul ; it is changed into another whose desires are different and whose strength is great ' (*Life*, ch. xxxix, 33).

reflecting that love alone moved his Majesty to elect you before all ages rather than many others who are condemned.

And that you are predestinated by the divine will that determines which souls are to go to heaven, you can see plainly by your vocation, for, according to S. Paul, ' whom he predestinated, them he also called,'[1] therefore you should in a special manner love him and submit to him. I say this to prevent your concerning yourself about questions that do not apply to you. Such a strong proof of your predestination as you possess in his having called you to his Christian religion should suffice. You have no other care but, as S. Peter says, to ' labour the more that by good works you may make sure your calling and election,'[2] for your vocation will avail you nothing unless you strive to follow it by the way of good works.

It is the greatest wisdom and an admirable principle to rise at once to love for God whenever we remember any mercy he has shown us, for he is the fount of all the graces he has bestowed. Even his chastisement comes from no other source but love, and if we realize this, we shall receive it with love.

The child does not feel the pain so keenly when it is his father who cauterizes it, knowing that he does it to cure the ill and not to vent his hatred. God strikes us with the flowering rod of the root of Jesse (which stands for ' inflammation ') to make us blossom into virtue, for he is inflamed with love and not with wrath when he punishes his children. Hence S. Cyprian says of Christ : ' Beloved by the Father, he loves us beyond all reason ; cures and heals us gratuitously and rewards us freely ; his love pursues even the ungrateful, whom he calls again and again, nor does he hate when he corrects and strikes. Love brought Christ even to his death, and risen, he still loves those for whom he shows such tender charity.'

S. Augustine well knew how to draw love from all things, for he cried to God : ' Lord, thou didst wound my heart with thy love, and I loved thee ; moreover heaven and earth and all that they contain bid me from every place to love thee : they cease not to say the same to all men, who are therefore inexcusable.'[3]

[1] Rom. viii, 30. [2] 2 S. Peter i, 10.

[3] S. Teresa laid special stress on her convents having a fine view and pretty garden. She says in her letters that she would rather pay a double price for a house with these than take a cheaper one that lacked them. Speaking of the convent at Seville, she writes : ' The garden is charming and the views are beautiful ' (Letter of May 9, 1576). She tells how she enjoyed watching the river run as she lay in bed at another convent, for she always had an especial love for water. Her convents celebrated their festivals with flowers and incense, music and candles.

Since we are told by all things to love God, we should draw love from them to return to him who gave them to us from love ; we should believe that created things are nothing but gifts bestowed on us by God to kindle a holy love for him.

In order to draw love from all created things and hear the hidden voice with which they bid us love God, we must look at them with eyes as chaste and tender as those of the faithful wife who gazes at the jewels given her to awaken in her love for the donor, and thinks more of him than of the trinkets themselves. All created things seem signs of love given by God to devout souls to remind them to love him more. This was so clear and evident to S. Augustine that he declared men were inexcusable, since all things cried to them to love God, though in some cases the ears of the heart, that is the mind and the will, were not fully prepared. The former reports and the latter draws love from all things, as their substance and virtue, to strengthen the faithful heart.

Therefore, muster your love as the merchant before going to the fair musters his coin so that he may purchase more goods. Since we have little love, do not let us disperse it on different objects, but every time we see it incline to what is not God, let us force it to return, and set it on him if we wish to follow the advice of the Apostle to use this world as though we used it not, and if we have wives, to be as though we have not.

The greatest care should be taken to uproot our love from our possessions and place it on God, though we are not forbidden to care for them. It is very helpful to cut off and root up our love from all else and set it in our Lord, for though he can be loved together with what is loved for his sake, it is better to love him alone, casting our undivided affection on him. This is why many people renounce worldly goods ; not that the latter are evil in themselves, but they may impede love for God, who is very jealous and dislikes our caring much for anything, lest we should linger on the way like Martha.

How the love man feels for other things is taken from him and set on God, I own I cannot tell, for the heart seems transported and is, as it were, beside itself, being transferred elsewhere into what robs it of its senses, nor can it remember how this forgetfulness of self and secret transport came about. It seems to be an infused gift that rather seizes than actuates it, for the soul cannot enjoy it whenever it wishes.[1]

[1] Fray Osuna appears to be speaking here of the rapture of the spirit described by S. Teresa. She writes : ' The soul really appears to have quitted the body, which, however, is not lifeless, and though, on the

Not only does the love of God set all other affections in order, but it cleanses them and purifies them from much dross and passion that stains them, so that as love for God increases, all other love is calmed and silenced and no longer causes its wonted pain and weariness. Though natural love seems enfeebled, it is not lost but moderated, and does not resist so strongly the dominion of love for God.[1]

Those who do not love God and have not tasted the love which satisfies the heart, know not how to love anything aright; for all other love is passion and torment, but love for God is refreshment and rest. We begin to possess this truly when we feel that nothing grieves us, for naught that happens to the just man should have power to trouble him.

CHAPTER VI

THAT THE JUST DERIVE LOVE EVEN FROM THE VIRTUES

It is of small account that those who wish to be perfect should derive love from the things I have mentioned, for they will not reach the height of perfection until they glean it from the very virtues they practise and concentrate it on God, so that they may live by love alone, like the butterfly[2] that comes from the silkworm

other hand, the person is certainly not dead, yet she cannot, for a few seconds, tell whether her spirit remains within her body or not. She feels that she has been wholly transported into another and a very different region from that in which we live. . . . Although no words are pronounced, the spirit is taught many truths. Three graces of a very high order are left in the soul. Firstly, there is a perception of the greatness of God which becomes clearer as we witness more of it. Secondly we gain self-knowledge and humility. . . . The third grace is a contempt for all earthly things unless they are consecrated to the service of so great a God. . . . The soul is filled with peace, calm, and good fruits' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. v).

[1] During ecstasy 'souls are transported out of themselves; yet afterwards if questioned as to what they felt, they cannot describe it, for they did not know nor could they understand this operation of love. . . . The King so sets the soul in order that all love for this world quits it, self-love changes into self-hatred, and affection for kindred is felt solely for the sake of God' (*Concep.* ch. vi).

[2] This comparison recalls the famous one made by S. Teresa of the soul that after divine union comes forth, like the butterfly from the chrysalis. 'The spirit does not recognize itself. . . . It desires to praise our Lord God and die a thousand deaths for him. . . . The little butterfly has died with the greatest joy at finding rest at last, and now Christ lives in her' (*Castle*, M. v, chs. ii, vii, 1). She often called the Discalced Carmelite nuns 'the butterflies.'

when its work is done and lives solely on love alone, caring for nothing else. This could hardly be explained in a long treatise, and even those who practise it barely notice that they do so, for their mind being bent on love, they scarcely think at all of their other virtues, since all but love seems of little account to them.

Beginners lay great stress on fasting, silence, prayer, and poor clothing, but the perfect perform these actions without thinking much about them or even taking notice of them, because all their thoughts are bent on love, which is a higher thing, so that a spiritual person said that to know that we perform virtuous actions is a minor point of perfection.

If two men could fly, and the one, without lingering or looking down at what lay below, flew high, while the other, on leaving the ground, kept his eyes fixed on the earth preoccupied with the distance he had risen, he would certainly be less perfect than his companion who only looked at how far he must mount, and cared nothing for what he had accomplished.

It will be seen, on considering this example, that we must draw love from the virtues and set this love on the high God to whom we fly, for philosophers took virtue for their end, but Christians only make it their instrument to obtain perfect love for God; they do not seek the virtues merely for the pleasure they give but because without them they cannot attain to the perfect love for God that is their aim.

Perhaps the blessed S. Jerome may have been thinking of this when speaking of the precious stones that adorned the King of Tyre, which according to the common gloss, are the virtues spiritually understood. This Doctor of the Church says: 'These are the pearls of the Prophets and the Apostles which are all sold to buy the precious pearl that has seven eyes—the seven graces of the Holy Ghost.' S. Jerome does not tell us to sell the virtues because we must get rid of them, as Beggardus taught,[1] but that in order to obtain perfect charity we must detach our love from them and centre it on God, who is more precious than all virtue; so that while possessing them, we may fix the eyes of our heart on love for his Majesty alone.

Some people stop to reckon in detail the trials and labours they undergo in the religious life. It has even been said to me that God could not possibly send friars to hell, because of the hard life they lead in this world as regards food, clothing, sleep, and the continual renouncement of their will, so that they do not spend a single day entirely as they choose, but for the whole of

[1] A heretic of the thirteenth century.

their life bear the yoke of obedience, which is a heavy burden if taken inconsiderately.

I answered: 'What you say would be true if God our Lord began to reckon by the things you mention, but he does not commence by outward but by interior things, and even in them he first considers the heart, in which he examines its love first of the four passions, for it is written that he ordered that examination should begin in his sanctuary,[1] which is the heart, wherein he dwells by love. Here he first judges us, afterwards taking into account all of which you speak if it proceeds from love: if that is wanting, all is lost. As S. Gregory says, the branch of good deeds has neither verdure nor foliage unless grafted on the root of charity.'

We should also derive love from the sins we have committed, grieving on account of the rupture of our love for God and for the time we spent without love for our Lord who loves us so dearly and who waited for our repentance that we might love him again.

We can even draw love from hell by thinking more of the want of love of those who dwell there than of the pains they suffer, and by avoiding it chiefly for that reason.[2]

We can also draw love from everything if we love it in the proportion that is compatible with love for God, making it our aim to include nothing that can impede this love, devoting ourselves specially to what will most strongly induce pure love for our Lord, ever striving to love and please his Majesty more.

They say that love is like the needle of a balance, the balance being our heart. This needle, which is love, if genuine should not incline more to trials than to joys, but show a welcome to all, calling them all God's mercies. Though indeed, if the love is true, it must lean more towards trials than consolations, for it is safer in this world to sorrow than to rejoice, and love proves its truth better in trials than in pleasures, like the knight, who shows his

[1] Ezech. viii, 16–18.

[2] This was what S. Teresa felt. She exclaims: 'Thou knowest, O Lord, that the thought of seeing thy divine gaze turned on me in wrath in that last horrible day of judgement has often terrified me far more than all that I have heard of the tortures and furies of hell, and I besought thee of thy mercy to save me from such misery, as I beseech thee now, Lord' (*Exclam.* xiii). 'Wicked as I am, I have never feared the torments of hell, for they have seemed to me as nothing when I remembered that the lost would see the beautiful, meek, and pitying eyes of our Lord turned on them in wrath. I have thought all my life that this would be more than I could bear' (*Castle*, vi, ch. ix, 4).

mettle better on the battlefield than when loitering among the ladies.[1]

When God gives us consolations, he shows his love for us, and when he sends trials, he wants to see whether we love him ; therefore the best advice is to receive all from him and derive love from it ; that is, to look upon it as a test by which he seeks to prove our love. When he comforts us, let us think that he wishes to see whether we shall care more for his gift than for him, and that his intention is to make us love him more.

Not only should you derive love from your own works, but also from those of others, loving him in their blessings ; for love is like a bee that sucks honey for its hive from every flower. And love, solely by its gratitude and pleasure in its neighbour's goods, makes them its own and offers them as its sacrifice to the Lord. Hence S. Gregory says : ' The graces that we cannot imitate but only love in others are ours, as our virtues become the property of those who love them. The envious should reflect upon the power of charity, which, with no labour we perform, makes ours the work of others. With neither effort nor fear, love gives us possession of the goods of others ; for in our own good deeds we always feel vain-glory, but not in those of our neighbour. No one should refuse to believe that love for the good works of others makes us their owner, since love for other people's sins makes us sinners.'

It is also very helpful to think that all our neighbour's actions spring from love for God, unless they are manifestly wrong, for thus we shall derive love from everything, because, as S. Dionysius says, all that our Lord did, whether to the righteous or to the wicked, inclined them to love for his Majesty. So far as possible, we must follow this path, seeing love in all things as this Letter of the Alphabet bids us.

You can also draw love from all relationship and officials, for if you reflect upon it you will find that God is your Father, your Mother, your Brother, and your perfect Friend, for he does you more good than all of these.[2] God protects men, makes known

[1] ' We must not look for consolations in prayer, but hold ourselves ready like brave knights who serve their king without pay . . . let us keep our eyes fixed on the eternal kingdom we seek to win,' says S. Teresa.

[2] S. Teresa seems to have recalled this passage when she told her daughters : ' Lay aside a certain reticence which some people maintain towards God under the impression that it is humility. . . . Practise no such humility, my daughters, but address him sometimes as a Father or as a Brother, or again as a Master or as your Bridegroom : sometimes in

great things to them, watches over rulers, and restrains the power of the devils better than do any of the angels, whose charge he takes upon him.

Again, you can draw love from all the virtues if you contemplate it in them, for it fasts with abstinence, is chaste with virginity, open-handed with generosity, and thus performs in a spiritual manner the actions of the rest.

You should derive love from all things, reflecting on the mercies shown to you and your neighbour as well, rejoicing in them, since they have been granted to the members of Christ, who is also your Head. As the eyes are, in their manner, pleased to see the feet shod and the body adorned, and the lips give thanks for it, so you should feel glad at the well-being of others and consider it as your own, holding yourself as debtor for it to God, who wishes to be paid by love alone. S. Chrysostom says of this : 'The faithful servant looks upon the divine benefits bestowed on all as though they were given to him alone and he was the sole debtor, bound to make repayment for all.'

We can also practise the advice of the present Letter very sweetly if whenever we see any defect in our earthly friends, we turn our mind to God and reflect that we never find in him any such fault or lack of love. We should soothe our heart by giving thanks to our most faithful Friend and Lord, who has never failed us nor will fail us : this will confirm our love for him, adding, as it were, another knot to the bonds of charity that held us to him before. And as men often fail in love, we can often turn thus to God and love him anew. In this way, by frequent acts of love, our tender devotion will increase and become more firmly rooted for this most loveable God of ours whose love we find in all things ; for if we should bless him for them, so should we love him in them.

All that we see must be a star that guides the three powers of the soul by love to God ; everything should be referred to his love, for it gave being to all, since by love alone he created them that they might love him. No sound reaches the ears of the devoted friend that does not change to love, for every bell or

one way, sometimes in another, for he will teach you what he wishes you to do. . . . Talk to him as to your Father : ask for what you want as from a father : tell him your sorrows and beg him for relief, realizing at the same time that you are unworthy to be called his daughter' (*Camino*, ch. xxviii). In ch. x of this Letter, Fray Osuna speaks eloquently of love for God and intimacy with him. Of the love between mother and child both writers speak repeatedly, also of that between bride and bridegroom.

instrument or song he hears seems to say from God: 'I love those that love me.' Not only from creatures but from the love we bear them can we derive love in this way: someone likes us, we remember, shows us kindness, speaks well of us, or wishes to see us; this makes us wish to thank and repay him. But if you would be wise, turn your thoughts to Christ, applying the cause that moved your affection specially to him; and as he is all things to us, you cannot but find in him better than in anyone else what will arouse your love.

If you wish to make progress, you must note carefully what I have just said. We can draw love even from the sins of others, for if the worlding loves his beloved, why should I not love mine, who is divine Wisdom? If he by the love I covet delights in what is wicked, why should I not rejoice in that which is most holy?

After having looked to the right and left, to past and future, above and below, I find Richard was very right in saying: 'No doubt perfect love for God, wherever it turns, finds frequent incentives to love. It makes mirrors of all it sees that recall the memory of its Beloved; it examines all that he created and for what end he made it, and nowhere meets with aught that is so attractive as its God; and from the pledges of affection he has already given, it wisely augurs what great things he is keeping for its chief endowment.'

We shall draw love from the right and from the left if we realize that prosperity and adversity are spurs applied by God to make us run more swiftly on the way of his love. From past and future you will derive it, seeing how you have mis-spent the past and how uncertain and brief is the future, if you bestir yourself to redeem by greater fervour what is left to you of life. You draw love from above and below when you make use of the active and contemplative life to prove whether you love God, and when sinners are a warning and the just an example to you.

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO DRAW LOVE FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

THE chief source from which to draw love is Holy Scripture, which being inspired and dictated by the Holy Ghost, who is love, contains within it no little of that quality. To give an example of this of which you can make use on other points, we will begin by referring to love in what is called the most needful part of the

Scriptures, which was written by the Holy Ghost, the Finger of God. I call the Commandments the most needful Scripture, because obedience to them is the Christian's strictest obligation. The spiritual and loving explanation that I give here shows that though the man who breaks one of the Commandments does not commit ten deadly sins, yet if we interpret the divine law by the perfection of love, we shall find that he who offends against the first commandment is, in a way, guilty of breaking them all. For he who does not love God with all his heart and strength above all others, takes his holy Name in vain, since he violates the profession he made in Baptism and all the other vows he took in order to love God better. In vain does he bear the name of Christian who does not live as such : in vain did his soul receive that title in Baptism, since it is not employed for the end for which it was created.

Thus he who does not love God, does not keep holy the Feasts of the Church, nor does he know what a day of rejoicing is, for in God alone is found by love true joy and repose. Feast days that are not celebrated for love of him are jeered at by the enemy.

Also, he who loves not God, does not understand what it means to honour father and mother, for he alone honours them who fulfils the intention they were bound to have when they begot him, which was to call into being a creature who might love and possess God.

Further, he who loves not God not only slays his own soul, but, so far as in him lies, deprives himself of temporal life by making himself unworthy of it. If life is still granted him, it is by the great mercy of God who waits until the sinner is converted to his love. Hence it is written in Lamentations : ' The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed '[1] and annihilated.

The man who does not love God is also an arrant thief, for no ruler on earth has so just a claim to anything as God has to our hearts. He made them for himself, gave his own for ours, and redeemed them : he asks for them and forbids us to bestow them elsewhere, and men who do not love him, take them from him.

As for the next commandment, he who loves not God, lives in spiritual adultery, withdrawing his soul from him to whom it was espoused in Baptism.

By lack of love for God a man bears false witness against himself, because though he seems to be a Christian, being in communion with the faithful, and is therefore held as such, yet in reality he has not kept faith with God because his soul has forgotten

[1] Lam. iii, 22.

its compact with him, which is the constant love that ought to exist between the soul and its Lord. A learned man was not wrong in saying that the sinner is a trickster, for he is not what he seems but very much the reverse.

In regard to the next commandment, he who does not love God covets his neighbour's wife, for as he is wanting in firmness he yields to imperfections and failings which, in Holy Scripture, are symbolized by women.

Again, without the love of God, a man is bound to covet the goods of others, for there is nothing more alien to us than that which we cannot bring into this world, nor take to the next, nor even have the power to keep in this life.

On the other hand, if we reverse this loving meaning that we must draw from Holy Scripture, we can say that he who truly loves God does not take the name of his Majesty is vain, for his heart is full of love and so the better able to receive the Holy Name of our Lord. This is the opposite in human matters, in which the fuller the receptacle, the less can it receive in addition.

As the portion of Holy Writ that the faithful most often make use of is the Lord's Prayer, composed by him that we might pray to his Father in the way he wishes, and it is suitable for us, I will take it as an example of how we can derive love from the whole of the Sacred Scriptures by making this our aim. S. Luke says that our Lord was praying in a place apart while the Apostles waited for him. When he ceased, one of them said to him : 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.' Seeing that their petition was reasonable our Lord at once complied, first telling them that they must pray in secret without many words. He gave them a short prayer, saying : 'Thus therefore shall you pray : Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen.' It would be easy to draw fire from such living flints as these words and all that they contain, which no doubt came from sovereign love, for as Christ, as God, cannot be said to pray, and as man, could not benefit himself by composing the form of words, he must have prayed solely in order to draw his disciples affectionately to do the same, and to give themselves to prayer. Hence he may be compared to the eagle that entices her young to fly, hovering over them.

That our Lord could not assist himself by the form of words is evident ; for one thing, his prayer was so high that it could not

rise higher, also because he who was never overcome by drowsiness did not require to kneel, therefore it was solely from love that he acted as a beginner who must fall on his knees, so that he might teach his own how to pray. By the words ' when he ceased praying,' the Gospel does not mean mentally but outwardly. His prayer took a new form ; he was like the nurse, who though she knows how to speak properly, talks in baby language to the child that it may learn how to talk well.

That our Lord acted in this way for the instruction of the disciples is clear, because they at once thought that it would be well to imitate him, and waited prudently until he had finished praying, when they approached and asked him as S. John had done how to pray. In asking this, no doubt they asked for what our Lord wished to give them : a form of prayer. In this they showed the subjection of love, which never asks for what it feels the beloved is loth to grant. The mention made of S. John, whose name signifies graceful, shows that true love never asks for anything except with the intention of pleasing or serving better.

One who loves deeply sometimes asks for a gift which he knows the beloved wishes to bestow in order to please him, and not because the gift is wanted. So when we know that persons have prepared something for us, we ask for it to gratify them, not because we need it.

So, if we love God perfectly, we must beg his favours rather to please him than to benefit ourselves, and we should always introduce S. John's name, as did the Apostles. By making no delay in answering their petition, our Lord showed that love soon obtains a hearing. This is denoted by the two directions given the disciples before he taught them to pray : for to tell them to pray in secret showed that prayer obtains intimate and very special gifts, and that they should use few words proves that Christ meant soon to grant what they asked.

CHAPTER VIII

AN EXPLANATION OF THE PATER NOSTER AS RELATING TO LOVE

THE first two words of this sacred prayer presuppose and signify the two commandments of charity, which are to love God above all things and our neighbour as ourselves.

The word ' Father ' clearly shows that we must love God and become his sons. It denotes such perfect love that the human tongue can hardly express it. It induces the highest kind of love

for others, since we love them in it as ourselves, making them our brothers and desiring for them God, who is the greatest of all blessings. S. Cyprian, who had thought deeply on the subject, said : ' The Teacher of peace and unity did not wish us to pray for ourselves alone, for we do not say : " My Father who art in heaven," nor " give me my bread," nor does each Christian pray that he alone may be forgiven, for the prayer is public and in common, and when we pray it is for the whole people, for we are all one. The God of peace and Teacher of concord, who inculcates unity, wishes that each should pray for all, as he, being one, taught all.'

Immense is the love denoted by the two words ' Our Father,' but to avoid being tedious we will pass on to the next that declare he is in heaven, that is, in his lovers, ' whose conversation is in heaven ' on account of the sublimity of their lives. The Lord finds great repose in these heavens, which show forth the glory of God. He himself affirms this, saying that heaven is his throne and the soul of the just is the seat of wisdom, also : ' His Spirit hath adorned the heavens,'[1] and the Holy Ghost adorns the souls of those who love God with more virtues than there are stars in the heavens. Merely by dwelling in them, by his sublime intelligence he rules them, giving them the impulse to return to him who sets them in action.[2]

Hence you see that the great petitions contained in this most brief prayer show the faithful servant of God that he should direct all his works and petitions to increasing his love ; therefore he should refer all things to love, which should be the fruit he gathers from them all. Accordingly, the first petition is that the name of God may be sanctified : God has many names, but the chief one is Love, because God is charity, which signifies love. To be sanctified means to be freed from what is earthly ; and to repeat this daily would be to beg that our love for him might be rectified day by day, and that it might be purified from what is earthly seven times, and many more. Hence to beg God as our heavenly Father to sanctify his name in us is to ask him to make our love heavenly and more pure daily, and like another Job, to

[1] Job xxvi, 13.

[2] ' Do you suppose it is of little consequence whether or not you know what this heaven is, and where you must seek your most holy Father ? . . . Remember what S. Augustine tells us : how he sought God in many places and at last found the Almighty within himself. . . . We have not to take wings to find him, but have only to seek solitude and look within ourselves ' (*Camino*, ch. xxviii).

send his children fresh sanctification every day, that our joys may increase.

As purity in love for God can hardly be attained in this world, the faithful soul prays in the second petition that the kingdom of heaven may come in it, for then its love will be more perfect and pure.[1] No wonder that God's lover longs to die, for constant love often repeats the words of him who said : ' I desire to be dissolved and be with Christ.' It is not death that it desires, but the kingdom of heaven which cannot be obtained without it ; nor does it wish to be dissolved except for the sake of being with Christ. This is brought about by all-wise Love, in order to martyrize these lovers, for dissolution or death undergone in order to be with Christ is a martyrdom of love, slaying us that we may be with him ; as Christ died in order to be with us and not to let us die.

When love cannot obtain this, it adds the third petition : ' Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.' This is the *fiat* of the Blessed Virgin, in which consists the highest perfection of love, whose end is to conform us entirely in all things, whether in prosperity or adversity, with all our heart to the Beloved. So that we not only suffer patiently and with entire conformity whatever happens, but we pray that what we did not wish for may be done, for love delights no less in what God does in opposition to its prayer than in its accomplishment. This is the conclusion of the third petition, which asks for conformity and joy of the sensitive nature (which is the earth) with the reason, which is heaven. For in the just not only the reason (heaven) must do the will of God, rejoicing in whatever he chooses to do, but the flesh must not murmur, though it may be injured : this constitutes the purest love for God. S. Ambrose says of it : ' Man is established in peace when body and soul are not at variance, but both desire and seek the same thing, remembering the words : " I and the Father are one." And these two " eyes," the desire of the soul and the flesh, are single, for they have the same desire and office.'

This petition also asks for conformity in tribulation (which is earth), and in consolation (which is heaven).

Note that in the three petitions mentioned there is to be

[1] S. Teresa teaches her nuns that the happiness of heaven ' consists in disregard of all earthly things and in a peace and glory that dwell in a soul which rejoices in the bliss of its companions.' . . . There are times when our Lord puts the weary travellers into a rest of the powers and quietude of soul that show, by a foretaste, what those enjoy whom he brings into his kingdom. This is the prayer of quiet, the beginning of pure contemplation (*Camino,* ch. xxx).

understood the love of beginners, of proficients, and of the perfect. Those who commence to love God ought to wish their love to be pure in the manner described and to increase ; unless they do, they have not begun to love God.

Proficients should desire to be dissolved, and that the kingdom of heaven may come (the second petition) so that they may behold the King in his beauty, with which love is satisfied.

To ascertain that this desire comes from the genuine love felt by proficients, it must be found to be so firmly fixed in the soul that neither human reason, nor delay, nor effort, nor fear, nor anything else in the world can affect it ; for after we have given a thousand reasons to one who holds it to prove that it is not well to wish to die, he answers in his heart, not by words but by a true interior act by crying to God : ' O my Lord, take me to thee ! '

If we tell him that the vessel often longs to reach the port in order to escape the tempests and that sometimes it founders and goes to pieces, and that in the same way some persons think that they will so escape the storms of this life and safely reach the port of heaven, but they founder on the rocks instead, he who so loves God that he wishes to die and go to him will reply : ' It is impossible for a man to save himself by his own strength, but God supplies all he needs.'

If we answer that though this is true, yet a man may be condemned to the pains of purgatory which are sometimes greater than those of hell, he merely replies that we must suffer all things in order to go to God and that it should be called a flowery road that leads to him, though it may be full of heavy trials.

Neither this love nor either of the other three can be acquired except by an especial gift of God and long effort and custom of uprooting our love from all but him. I tell you this in order that, if you should feel a sincere desire to die and go to God, you may not suppose it comes from yourself, for I believe it would be impossible to obtain it by human effort ; because it is combined with a trustfulness that makes it impossible for the soul to doubt that the Lord will show it mercy.

The third love, that of the perfect, calms this longing, and enables them to bear life patiently ; they make the third petition : ' Be thy will done in me on earth as it would be were I in heaven, for whether I die or whether I live, I am thine. If I were to die, it would only be to go to thee ; since I live, may I live for thee.' They have no will of their own : it is grafted in that of God. They live not, but Christ lives in them and they say with the

Apostle : ' Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ ? '[1] According to Origen, S. Paul was in a higher and more perfect state when he wrote that neither death nor life nor any other creature could separate him from Jesus Christ than when he said he desired to be dissolved and be with Christ. Supposing there were two knights, and one wished to enter the presence of the King and remain with him, but the other was as ready either to be with the King or to fight for him on the battlefield : evidently the latter is more perfect than the former.

Lest anyone who is not far advanced should imagine that he has this third love that belongs to the perfect, I would have him know that he will not really attain to it unless he has first experienced somewhat of the other kinds, for divine matters have their order, but they are all included in the love that says : ' I am ready to die and ready to live.' This so enkindles the heart as totally to detach a man from himself, and directs all his actions to the divine service ; therefore, with perfect confidence he asks in the fourth petition to eat him whom he serves, knowing that the labourer is worthy of his food, and says : ' Give us this day our daily bread.'

Such a man dares to ask for his own ; and he who has this perfect love counts as his own all that belongs to God because of his fervent love ; therefore he calls that his bread which he knows would not be his unless it were given him day by day, as this petition asks.

The bread begged for by the perfect lover is not that of servants but of sons : it is the enjoyment of sublime contemplation given to those who hunger for it, whom it fills with blessings. Of such it is said : ' With the bread of life and understanding she shall feed him.'[2]

The savour of contemplation is called the bread of life, for by its means our will begins to experience what belongs to eternal life ; it is termed bread of the understanding because it gives man sufficient knowledge of what he must do to be saved. As the chief thing is to love our neighbour and forgive injuries, love pleads this before the Lord that it may be pardoned, saying in the fifth petition : ' Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.'[3]

[1] Rom. viii, 35. [2] Ecclus. xv, 3.

[3] ' A firm resolution to forgive injuries, and enduring them although they wound is obtained in a very short time by the soul to whom God grants the grace of union. . . . Though such persons have other faults and imperfections, yet I never saw one who was unforgiving. . . . Give me, O Lord, something to forgive each day, that I may plead to be forgiven ! ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxvi).

Here the lover prays for his enemies in order to appease his heavenly Father and become the son of him who shows mercy to the good and the wicked. Hence the true lover does good to those who hate him, and tells God that he has forgiven them, so that he may be forgiven by divine Justice. Thus he obtains mercy for himself since he asks it for others and deserves to be forgiven even for the evil that he has not committed, by being delivered from falling into it, which he also asks for in the latter petition : ' Lead us not into temptation.'

He does not pray not to be tempted, for various temptations perfect and strengthen man, but that he may not fall into the snare nor be overcome. This can only come from the victorious hand of God, who curtails the power of the tempter and increases that of the tempted.[1]

Since the trials and evils of this life are many, they are all included in the final petition : ' Deliver us from evil. Amen.' Deliver us, O Father, from ills of the body, ills of the soul, and ills of sinfulness ; from those of suffering, of the evils of this world and the next, from ills past, present, and to come ; for unless thou, O Father, dost deliver us, we cannot be freed from one or many evils, little or great. Therefore, Father who dost dwell in heaven, who canst do all things, ' deliver us from evil. Amen.'

Thus love's petitions end, for as S. Cyprian says, after having prayed to be delivered from evil, nothing remains to be asked.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT THIS LOVE FOR GOD SHOULD BE

AFTER having explained, to the best of our poor ability, how love should be drawn from all things, it may be asked what this love should be. The great commandment of love tells us.

But so many kinds of love are described that it would fill a book to write of them. One sort of love is called free, another natural,

[1] ' The foes that contemplatives really dread—and it is well that they should dread them and should always pray God that they may be delivered from them—are those treacherous antagonists the devils, who transform themselves into angels of light. . . . Let us constantly beg of God, my daughters, to deliver us, that we may not be deluded by their temptations, but that we may detect their poison and that light may not be withdrawn from us. What good cause has our kind Master to teach us to ask for this and to demand it himself on our behalf ! ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxviii).

another seraphic, others purgative, illuminative, perfect, habitual, supernatural, ecstatic, strong, wise, sweet, recollected, discreet, solicitous, vigorous, inseparable, invincible, insatiable, singular, changeable, constant, warm, fervent, penetrating, acute, inflexible, upright, intense, intimate, outspoken, unitive, affectionate, tender, spiritual, communicative, irremissible, changeless, complete, infinite.

These and other kinds of love are enumerated which, if they were arranged according to the letters of the alphabet, would be easily learnt and meditated upon by lovers, and be very useful as a means of attaining to perfect love, especially if the many reasons there are for loving his Majesty were considered. They are too many to be mentioned here, but I advise you, as our Letter bids, to refer to love for God all the reasons you find for loving creatures, contemplating them only in God,[1] where you will find them in most perfect unison, for from him as from their source flows all that causes love, while remaining in him in supreme perfection.

There is no one thing in which everything desirable and pleasant is combined; this is reserved for Christ our Redeemer, in whom everything human or divine that is loveable is united. Therefore be most careful, if you wish to profit by this Letter, whenever your love inclines to anything, to bring it back at once to Christ, contemplating in him, in higher perfection, that which attracted you in the creature.

If you think you ought not to renounce your affection for a certain person because he is your father or brother, view him in Christ so that your love may grow. But if the thing to which you feel inclined is impure, say to your sensuality: 'Love not this, lest you should lose the love of Christ in whom is to be found without stain the filthy thing that attracts you here.'

Those who practise recollection will speak to God alone, to whom their pure love mounts without the use of the imagination, but solely by the understanding which rises above all that can be imagined to God. S. Augustine seems to have had this in mind when he said: 'O my God, what do I love when I love thee? Not bodily beauty, not temporal loveliness, not the splendour of light, nor colour, nor the sweet melody of song, nor the delicious perfume of flowers, nor aromatic unguents, nor sweets, nor honey, nor what is pleasant to embrace or touch. None of these things connected with the senses do I love when I love my God . . . yet

[1] 'Some persons are consoled and make progress by meditating on the power and greatness of God in his creatures and on his love visible in all things. This is an admirable method' (*Life*, ch. xiii).

nevertheless, when I love him, I love a light, a perfume, a voice, a food, an embrace of my interior being—a light brighter than all other light, unbeheld by my eyes : a perfume surpassing all others, unknown to the nostrils : a voice above all other voices, unheard by the ears ; a supreme sweetness that the tongue tastes not, an embrace exceeding all others, yet unfelt by the touch.'

According to the teaching of this Doctor of the Church, the highest meaning of this Letter is that we should draw love from all created and imaginable things and direct it to the supreme Good who created us and is our last end.

To this supreme Good your love must be directed. Let faith be your messenger. Do not stop at what appears to you to be prudent ; enlarge your heart, for you must not go back to petty things. Take courage and incite your will and heart to love him who made you ; arouse yourself to do this ; enliven your faith ; like a faithful Christian, learn to pray in spirit and in truth and love that highest Good who is far above all that he has created. Bear in mind that the love you must derive from all creation must not be in words alone but in very real acts of your heart ;[1] if you practise this, you will gain a love more tender than that you feel for your father and mother, and this will reach such a pitch that the sole thought of that supreme Good will overcome you with love.

Stimulate the natural love you bear for your God, so that later on you may love him without an effort and your soul may go to him more eagerly than the child to its mother. You can obtain this if you accustom yourself to derive love for him from all things and direct it to that unthinkable God who is more present within you than you are in yourself, and who, though you do not see him, governs you and preserves your life. What he seeks and desires and orders and asks you is solely that you should love him, and he promises that if you do, he will manifest himself to you by immense proofs of his affection for you.

[1] ' The good of the soul does not consist in its thinking much but in its loving much. This love is to be had by a good resolution to do and suffer for God, and by carrying out that resolution by acts whenever the opportunity occurs' (*Found.* v). Etchegoyen says that in the *Life* S. Teresa, like Fray Osuna, looks upon the ' acts ' of love as the emotions and joys of prayer. Later on, she looks upon acts of zeal and charity for others as the result, as shown particularly in the *Exclamations* and *Conceptions* : ' The greatest service we can render thee is to leave thee for the sake of loving and aiding others. . . . Who loves not his brethren loves not thee, my Lord, for thy blood shed for us bears witness to thy boundless love for the sons of Adam ' (*Exclam.* ii ; see also M. vii of the *Castle*).

Perhaps you find it hard to love God whom you have never seen and cannot imagine. But since you believe in him and hope in him, why do you not love him ? It seems to me, if you examine the question, that you will find the difficulty lies rather in believing in him than in loving him, and since you believe in one whom you have never seen nor ever can see while you live, why do you not love him in whom you believe ?

Consider : you have done much by believing in him, and all will be lost unless you love him in whom you have believed, who is an almighty Father, the Creator of heaven and earth, invisible, impalpable, since by none of the senses can you apprehend him but only by the will which can love him wholly. He is not capable of being figured or numbered, but is unlimited, immovable, unsearchable, inestimable, infinite, and wholly loveable.

Perhaps you find it hard to detach your love from what is palpable and common, of which even brutish souls are fond. Are you not to rise above them ? I will prove to you that your will loves what you do not see ; you do not consider this and so cease to love God as you could easily do if you reflected.

You love your father while he lives, and when he dies you send him away. You weep and grieve though you still have before you what you saw before ; the only thing lacking is what you did not see, for the rest remains. You did not see the life ; this is missing : this is why you weep ; doubtless this is what you loved, since you mourn its absence. You realize that you loved what you did not see : life. Think of an eternal life which does not dwell in an earthly and defective body such as your father's was, but will never fail, and is the life of your soul and of all the angels ; love this Life ; draw love from all things and place it in this.[1]

You love a clever man who teaches you : he goes mad ; you are sorry and care or think no more about him.

You love a man who is upright though poor : he does wrong ; and you hate and avoid him if you are told that he is no longer what he was. All that you could see is still in him ; you believe that he has lost the good qualities and wisdom that you could not see, but which were what you loved, it seems, and not his body, which is still there and which you reject.

Think, then, of that Wisdom which also is invisible and distant ; it is not connected with man's brain, but remains apart in the purest of knowledge that can neither fail nor err. Think of the infinite strength that cannot fear for it has no weakness : that

[1] S. Teresa underlined this passage, no doubt in reference to the death of her father of which she speaks in ch. vii of her *Life*.

rules all things, moving them without change in itself. Direct your will to this ; set on this your love which is so precious since this supreme God sees naught else in the world.

Only in this way can you contemplate God in all the perfections to be found in creatures, overlooking their imperfections, as S. Augustine says, for there is nothing in him but all the perfections that can be imagined in a pure, unmixed condition, apart from all that is less excellent, and so united to God that they are essentially God himself.

Accordingly you must refer purely and solely to God all the virtue and beauty you find in creatures ; hence you will derive love that you must direct to the Fount of all perfections, who is the uncreated Good.

This love consists in an affectionate and orderly direction of the will to this supreme Good ; and by this will, which is a loving reverence for God, the whole heart and feelings rush towards him more swiftly than the stone descends to the centre of the earth. This happens with proficients without their thinking of it, as their natural love is so alert and turned to God, whom they love without deliberation. We instinctively incline to what is fair and graceful, and in the same way an habitual affection reverts to God, often without thinking of him beforehand ; in fact love acts of its own accord because things in themselves calculated to inspire love now arouse love for God : such as songs, joys, beauty, perfumes, flowers, and music. That which would produce evil longings in the wicked incites the recollected to love God, often without any thought of it, for the custom and energy of the heart are so disposed to love that it frequently acts without taking any means to dilate itself beforehand.

If we kept our heart detached from every other affection and accustomed ourselves to turn with intense love directly to the Divinity, attending to nothing else and regulating our likings wisely, our love would penetrate all else until it reached him, turning neither to the right nor to the left. But to attain this, we must withdraw from all other love, good or evil, and go straight to God, like a swimmer cleaving the water. This is true recollection, for the powers of the soul collect together and help one another so that they may devote themselves unwearyingly to the work and may arouse this love seventy times seven each day, until it lights on the altar of the heart almost of its own accord, so as to consume all else, applying other things to the aim of loving the Deity.

This occurs on numberless occasions every day to such souls,

for they offer God a share in the pleasures they enjoy, giving them back to him in return for the joys and blessings his love has bestowed. They even refer to him all the happiness of others, and rejoice in him, drawing love from all, even from creatures that have not the gift of reason. In fact, I knew someone who on seeing a cock flap its wings to crow, felt his heart genuinely touched and moved to love God with great tenderness. Things of the same kind often happened at other times, for he found in everything a stimulant of divine love. Custom and grace, which greatly helped him, often brought this about without any thought of his, so that he found he was loving God. He rejoiced exceedingly at perceiving that he was in such a high state that divine grace, together with the natural love in his soul for God aroused in him unrestrained love from what he saw, so that his whole being, body and soul, rejoiced in the Divinity, like his who said : ' My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God.'[1] He who feels in his heart this divine ardour, which is the living love of the Divinity, declares that he rejoices in the living God ; and this joy being both corporal and spiritual, is attributed to the heart and flesh.

I do not know what you who read this book think of this love, but I can assure you that he who experienced it prized it more than dominion over heaven and earth ; and he was right, for man's welfare lies chiefly in this, as Gerson says : ' Blessed are they whose love of choice coincides with their natural love, for if the two agree, the heavenly Father has given them all for which they asked, for they only asked for God or for what was pleasing to him and conformable with the nature in which they were created.'

I will not omit to consider, with S. Augustine, the following verse of this Psalm, in which David states the reason for his joy, saying : ' For the sparrow hath found herself a house, and the turtle a nest for herself where she may lay her young ones.' This sparrow is the heart I have spoken of, which, as S. Augustine notes, must be solitary, as it has to seek God alone and mount to the roof—that is to say, must rise by desire above all things. For the house the roof covers is this world, which the heart must leave behind it, like the Apostle, forgetting it in order to reach the divine dwelling and heavenly converse.

If our body is controlled, in the way the gloss describes, it is called a turtle because the dove is contented with one mate, and the flesh of those who love God in this sublime manner seeks nothing but his Deity on which it sets its affections, desires, and

[1] Ps. lxxxiii, 3.

inclinations, which are like weak young ones. It is said to return[1] because, as Gerson points out, such souls return to the right order of our primitive, unfallen nature, from which sin and evil customs have withdrawn us. To this we must strive to return by divine grace and the practice of devout exercises that conduce to God's work in us.

David puts the heart before the flesh because this love begins in our interior and in the soul before it goes forth, at times, to the exterior senses, as the gloss comments. It is written that the sparrow, which is the soul, finds itself a house and the turtle a nest, which is less, for as S. Augustine explains, the house lasts a long and the nest a short time. The nest is the tender and joyful love, which being partly corporeal, does not last so long as we wish, for many things deprive us of it and we cannot obtain it whenever we desire. But the spiritual love of the soul does not depart except on account of mortal sin. This corporal love, partly attributable to the body that has begun to flourish anew, is sometimes lost through illness, engrossing occupations, or trials, or by the devil's schemes to deprive us of it by rousing scruples or passions, or by oppressing us with work or anxiety to make us lose the enjoyment of this surpassing love, to preserve which all who hate the world should direct their lives.

CHAPTER X

HOW TO SEEK THIS LOVE

SINCE the devil strives to deprive us of this love, which is a fruit of the Spirit, a sign that God dwells within us, a superabundance of grace, and a meal given to our servant the body that it may serve us joyfully, we ought to try to preserve it. Firstly, we should withdraw from all sin, even venial, for the true lover endeavours to avoid all offence, not thinking of the punishment due to it, but of the Beloved whom all evil offends, great and small. Secondly, we should cultivate every virtue, losing no occasion of doing good and being very zealous in acts of piety, which have great merit. Thirdly, we should not set our love on anything, but possess what we have as a loan, so that we may not fix our heart on that, but on God. Fourthly, let us arouse our heart from sleep, so that it may often make acts of tender love.[2]

[1] The Spanish gives ' return to lay her young ones.'

[2] ' Osuna from the first lays down the three fundamental propositions that, firstly, union with God is possible for the contemplative ;

The first of these actions will remove our fear of approaching God. The second will give us courage to go to him and even to embrace him. The third will give us strength to take the kingdom of heaven by violence with great impetus and strength of love. The fourth will make us swift and skilful to achieve this work easily, and if we wish to do it joyfully, let us think of what will arouse our love. Let us utter loving words to God as though we kindled the fire with the breeze of dulcet words that soothe and cheer our will if said with a living faith, making no use of the imagination, or of things we have seen or heard. Let it not be kept within human limits, but let us realize that we are speaking in spirit with our most loving God : not physically, for our soul is not corporeal, nor is God whom we address corporeal in his Deity. We ought to say to him with our whole heart :

' O dearest Friend of my heart, most benign Bounty of those who seek thee, Comforter and support of my soul, deifying those who give themselves to thee ; the one Hope of my love, Source of the fire of love in which I delight, my Ruler and my Glory ; who dost satiate my longing desires ; Justice that dost justify thine own ; most dear Charity of Catholics ; most generous Munificence and Light of my eyes ; most merciful Sovereign of the cowardly ; most noble by nature, knowing all wisdom ; good Providence of all my ways, beneficent Father and Possession of the poor, peaceful Rest of those who mourn their faults, Refreshment and comfort of those who labour in loving thee ; Health of the saintly who are sick of love ; Teacher and Treasurer of those who have filial fear of thee ; sanctifying and victorious Goodwill of all the tempted ; Life of my life ; most Christian preserver of those who persevere in love for thee ; sweet Instructor who by word of mouth dost impart great secrets ; Monitor of my soul ! O my God, let thy love be my guard since I love thee ! Oh that I had never offended thee ! Never more will I offend thee ; give me grace for this since I love thee far more than all created things ! '[1]

secondly, that it is possible on earth for everyone ; thirdly, that it requires constant vigilance over our personality ' (Etchegoyen). The means, love for God as the motive of our sorrow for sin, practice of the virtues, mortifications and poverty, with humility, are those laid down by S. Teresa for her nuns, especially in the *Camino*. Of sorrow for sin, she says : ' Great pains are required in order to root holy fear deeply in the soul, although when a genuine love is felt for God, he soon gives it on seeing her firm determination not to commit a venial sin for the sake of any created thing, and that not to avoid a thousand deaths would she offend him ' (*Camino*, ch. xi, 5).

[1] The titles used in this prayer are arranged alphabetically in the Spanish, but this could hardly be rendered in an English translation.

This holy prayer is very easily learnt, being arranged in alphabetical order, written in a very sweet and loving style, and apt to arouse love. No bellows will make love burn so brightly unless it is completely extinguished. Even if it is, this prayer, recited sincerely, will rekindle it, and if said with devotion, will obtain pardon for venial sins and partial remission of the penalty due for mortal offences. It will soften your heart, and whenever you utter it earnestly, you may feel certain that you love God, unless your conscience accuses you of being in a state of mortal sin. I tell you this deliberately : not for the sake of talking but to teach the truth and give you an opportunity of gaining merit.

I have not enumerated here the many signs of love mentioned in other books, as I feel sure that whatever good is in just souls is wrought by love, for their good actions are signs of it, and whatever results of grace you perceive in yourself, you must reckon as proofs of love. If you find what is wrong, grieve for it chiefly as a want of love, which is the first thing you must see to, for it is the root of all other evils, and a skilful gardener attends first to the root of the tree.

Although it is said that some sins come from ignorance or weakness, and others from malice, it would be better to say that they come from want of love for God, because charity has cooled. For if love increases, malice declines and virtue grows stronger and becomes easy, while our ignorance is enlightened. Hence love for God is called honourable wisdom, for our understanding is compared in Holy Scripture to a fire that enlightens love, and the Holy Ghost came in tongues of fire, signifying that he enkindled and taught, as it is written : ' He hath sent fire into my bones and hath chastized me.'[1] And S. Augustine declares that no one can know perfectly who does not love perfectly.

Remember, brother, that all your faults have their source in want of love, and grieve first for this, like the wife who loses all her property with her husband ; she weeps first for him, for with him she had her riches. So when you lack love for God, all good is lacking ; but when that comes back, it brings the rest with it and gathers all the flock together, as Christ did when he rose again.

We must presume that all the good we see in others comes from the love they bear his Majesty, as is shown by the words of the wise man : ' The care of discipline is love : and love is the keeping of her laws.'[2] Love is not content with keeping that part of

[1] Thren. i, 13. The Spanish has *enseñóme*, ' taught me.'
[2] Wisdom vi, 19.

the law of love that alone is binding, but observes it all and fulfils it to the last tittle. For if, as the wise man says : ' He that feareth God, neglecteth nothing,'[1] he who loves him will be still less neglectful. We may therefore conclude that love observes all the divine laws and commandments.

Why should we not love thee, O Lord my God ? Why do we follow vanities ? We delight in all other things, however petty, but thy sweetness, the infinite source of joy, is insipid to us, and worse still, we do not miss it or pray that we may love thee. Who blinds, who hinders us ? Who has forbidden us to love ? Thou, my most loving God, art endless goodness that in itself invites infinite love. The angels in heaven do nought but love thee ; the whole law, reason, and Holy Scriptures neither exhort nor beg, nor command anything but love for thee ; thy love is more worthy of love than any created thing ; love is our most suitable and delightful work, and we were not born, nor shall we continue to exist, save but to love thee. Thou hast entered my being, so that, finding thee near me, I may love thee better and not weary myself in seeking thee ; thou dost never grow tired of doing good to me in order to make me love thee. Thou dost forgive all ; convert, justify, draw me to thee, to gain my love ; thou dost scourge, dost fondle, uphold me with thy grace : send thine angel to protect me, and conscience and the devil to threaten me, unless I love thee. Thou dost promise me thy kingdom and thyself with it without seeking any return but love ; didst create me in thy likeness to move me to love for thee ; thou dost love all my interests, and in thee is the fulfilment of all my desires.

If kings, masters, teachers and parents are beloved, what prevents my loving thee ? Since thou art all this to me, what could be more just and delightful and less sordid than love for thee ? To incite our malice to love him, God added other reasons no less powerful, for of the acts of the Incarnation and Passion and all relating to them Isaias said : ' The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.'[2] He was not contented to gain your love by having made you in his own image, but made himself in yours, almost rendering you superior to himself. So that no father ever did for his son what the Almighty did for you to win your love, though he did not seek your love because he needed it but because you would have been lost without it. His chief aim is not that you should give yourself to him, but that he should give himself to

[1] Ecclus. vii, 19.

[2] Isa. ix, 7. The Spanish gives : *El celo amoroso de Dios,* ' the loving zeal of God performed them.'

you,[1] for without him you would fall away ; so that to tell you to love him is to tell you that he will fill you with blessings ; and even then his love is not exhausted, but longs that you may receive greater gifts.

Seeing that God does all things in order to love and to be loved, our Letter is right in bidding us draw love from all things, that we may return it to the source from which it flowed, and may in some way resemble the citizens of heaven, whose office is to love. They even hope to receive us into their company so that the help of more lovers may rise to them from this world, for as the love of God is infinite, they cannot love as they are loved. As love hopeth all things, they long to make an equal return of what they receive. They resemble the sea shore, for they return the floods of love that pour on them to the source from whence they come. And so love given and returned will last for ever, and blessed will he be who shares with them the love that unites and makes them love more deeply !

As I do not feel that I have even begun to explain this subject as it deserves, I have decided to add another much longer treatise which you will find at the end of this volume. It will be called : *The Law of the love of God and of our neighbour*.[2] There you will learn how to draw love from every divine work, and what God has done for heaven and earth.

[1] ' Now is the time to accept what this compassionate Lord and God of ours gives us. He seeks our friendship : who would deny it to him who refused not to shed all his blood and lose his life for our sakes ? See, there is nothing he asks from us, a mere nothing, and only what is best for us to give him ' (*Exclam.* xiv, 6).

[2] The *Ley de Amor*, alternatively called the *Fourth Spiritual Alphabet*, is considered by Etchegoyen as perhaps the finest of Osuna's works, being a synthesis of the three former *Spiritual Alphabets* in a richer and more concise form. The early edition, which has not been reprinted in modern times, treats under the form of symbols and allegories of asceticism and mystic love (*L'Amour divin*, p. 41).

SEVENTEENTH TREATISE

COUNSELS HOW TO COMBINE EXTERIOR WITH INTERIOR PERFECTION, SAYING: 'LET YOUR BODY FOLLOW JESUS AND YOUR SOUL FOLLOW HIS DIVINITY.'[1]

CHAPTER I

OUR BODY MUST FOLLOW OUR LORD IN HIS SUFFERINGS

THAT which most excites men's fear is that they must follow Jesus, for he runs swiftly, like a powerful giant, and no one can overtake him. He is so far ahead on the way of perfection as to be lost to sight, and he travels by a lonely, desert road, infested by wild animals, and so difficult and parched that no one can go by it. Hence many people choose other ways, following their own reason or opinions or appetites; they seek some other paths, and even without seeking them, find many that lead to hell and are so smooth and pleasant that they forget what a terrible reception they will meet with in the end. They only think of the pleasant way and fresh air and companions and that, whichever road they take, they are sure of society.[2]

They are like the thief, who walks, accompanied by a crowd of people, through the cool, shady orchards to the gibbet. Our Lord God says to each of these souls: 'Thou shalt not follow the multitude to do evil: neither shalt thou yield in judgement to the opinion of the most part.'[3] Vices, and the wicked and their ways and customs unite to do evil; they defend and help each other in their ill-doings. They will not succeed, but when they seem most in accord, they will be bound in bundles to be

[1] This is the Letter S. *Siga tu cuerpo a Jesus. . . .*

[2] 'I often wonder and never can understand how self-indulgent people can feel so peaceful and at rest. Did the most sacred body of our great Model and Light merit less enjoyment than do ours? The saints are in heaven: that is certain: have we read of any who got there by living luxuriously on earth? Who told us that it was right? . . . One would suppose that there was no future world and that theirs was the safest way to live' (*Concep.* ii).

[3] Exod. xxiii, 2.

thrown into hell, where they will pay dear for the cool and shady road by which they travelled in their life-time.

The judgement and opinions of such people must neither be approved nor followed, for the more there are who share them, the more go astray. Christ alone goes rightly, and all who do not follow him are on the wrong track. You must not be surprised that only one does well and many fail, for there is but one way of hitting the mark—to aim the arrow straight at it—and there are countless ways of missing it.

To hit the bull's-eye that wins everlasting life, go by the straight, direct road taken by Christ our Redeemer. If you wish to miss it and go to hell, do as you like, for you are sure to go wrong.[1] But if you want to succeed, let your body follow Jesus and your soul his Divinity. If you are a sheep, keep close to your Shepherd lest the wolf devour you, and you will be able to say with the prophet: 'I am not troubled, following thee for my pastor.'[2]

A man who follows another who he fears may mistake the way feels anxious until he reaches his destination, but if he is certain the other can guide him, he is confident. To follow Christ is safe, for he came down from heaven on purpose to teach us the way and bring us to him.

But it is sad to think that though a dog will follow his master and will not leave him wherever he goes, like the dog of Tobias, yet a man, who is more intelligent, does not follow Christ, his Lord and Redeemer except, like S. Peter, to the house and the garden.

On seeing Christ made prisoner, he takes flight and deserts him whom he had promised never to forsake even though, if need be, he too might be captured. In prosperity we follow Christ and in adversity abandon him. We do not follow him in contempt and hard ways and penance and pain, but in things that are not difficult, such as going to the wedding and the Supper of the

[1] 'The great affair of souls when they begin to pray is to begin also to detach themselves from every kind of joy, and to enter on it resolved only to carry the cross of Christ, like good soldiers, willing to serve their King without present pay because they are sure of it at last. . . . The great source of our deliverance from the cunning devices and the sweetness which Satan sends is to commence with a resolution to walk in the way of the Cross from the very first, and not to desire any sweetness at all, seeing that our Lord himself has pointed out the way of perfection, saying: "Take up thy cross and follow me." He is our example; and whosoever follows his counsels only to please him, has nothing to fear' (*Life*, ch. xv). 'They who would follow Christ, if they do not wish to be lost, must walk in the way he walked himself. Blessed labours!' (*Ibid*, ch. xi).

[2] Jer. xvii, 16.

Paschal Lamb. We keep close to him in consolations, and, like the bride, invite him to the flowery fields and the delights of interior joys. But if we see him in any suffering that we should dislike, we leave him to undergo it alone, not like a faithful dog but a faithless hound who follows the prey over the plains but desists when he sees it enter a wood or thorny place where he could take it better though it would cost him trouble. The following of Christ never profits us more than when we pursue him through the thorns of the passions, insults, and poverty, for then, although it costs us dear, we find him the sooner.

Bad soldiers follow their captain when he gives them food and pay, but when called up to battle, try to find some excuse, like the Israelites on leaving Egypt, though armed for war with God for their Captain to guide them on the way with a column of cloud by day and of fire by night, so that he might lead them at all times. There are many people like them. They go forth from the darkness of sin in which they were the slaves of Pharaoh, who is the devil. They set forth armed and resolute : Christ does not fail them, for he has the cloud of his Humanity to protect them in the day of prosperity, showing them the trials he suffered, and preventing the burning sun (this world's favour) from harming them ; and in the night of adversity he is a column of fire by the Divinity within him which enlightens their souls, making them remember the eternal reward. In spite of all this, many fall in the struggle, and never reach the promised land, which is perfect virtue. Frightened at the giants that guard it, which are the devils, they deserve to die in the desert without reaching the end at which they aimed.

If, brethren, we wish to truly follow Christ, let us, like the Apostles, setting aside the traps of worldly cares the devil lays for us, renounce the charge of our relatives in temporal matters ; care nothing for the riches or friendships of this world ; giving up our evil desires and vices, our prejudices and opinions, so that there will be no obstacle to our following Christ who goes before us, whom we must imitate outwardly.[1] Our Letter of the Alpha-

[1] Speaking of beginners, S. Teresa writes : ' It is most important to withdraw from all unnecessary cares and business, so far as compatible with the duties of one's state of life. . . . This is so essential that unless done immediately I think it is impossible for anyone ever to reach the principal room of the Castle, or even to remain where he is without running great risks of losing what he has already gained. . . . What then would become of religious like ourselves if after having escaped all these impediments they should, through their own fault, return to all this turmoil ? ' (*Castle*, M. i, ch. ii, 16, 17).

bet bids us ' follow Christ with our body,' and as the second part of the sentence adds, we must also follow him interiorly, so that our soul may follow his Divinity, the one imitation being outward, the other inward, as befits both him and us. It befits him, because he contains in himself both Divinity and Humanity ; the one is outwardly visible, because we are corporeal outwardly, and within are spiritual, so that our soul and body must act in these two ways : the body imitating Jesus and the soul spiritually following his Divinity, fulfilling what the wise man says of Christ's servants : ' All her domestics are clothed with double garments.'[1] It is not right that the body should lack the garments of virtue since we hope to be glorified in it, nor should the soul be destitute of them, but both should adorn themselves for him and in him of whom S. John says that he healed all men on the Sabbath day, that is, in the Law of grace.

CHAPTER II

OF THE FIRST FOLLOWING OF CHRIST

As regards the first, exterior following, although it includes every kind of imitation by which we can outwardly copy Christ, we must not suppose that it is not voluntary or heartfelt, for it is very voluntary and perfect. The Apostle speaking of it in the sense of our Letter of the Alphabet says : ' From henceforth let no man be troublesome to me, for I bear the marks of the Lord Jesus in my body.'[2] And again : ' You are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body.'[3]

I believe that the Apostle here alluded to the first counsel of the Letter ; the perfect exterior imitation of Christ. Lest you should be satisfied with this alone, hear what S. Bernard said to his monks : ' Do not be negligent or slow ; you have yet far to go, for our profession is sublime ; it is heavenly ; equal to that of the angels, and as pure as theirs, for not only have you vowed sanctity in all things, but the perfection of all sanctity, consummate in every way. It does not befit you to neglect the commandments given to all, nor solely to look at what God *enjoins*, but at what he *wishes*, " that you may prove what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God."[4] It is for others to serve God, and for you to unite yourselves with him ; for others to

[1] Prov. xxxi, 21.
[2] Gal. vi, 17, 18
[3] 1 Cor. vi, 20.
[4] Rom. xii, 2.

believe in, know, love, and revere him ; for you to taste, understand, experience and possess fruition and joy in him.'

This is the teaching of that Saint, and it ought not to seem difficult to the perfect, since Christ our Redeemer goes before, who told us, speaking of himself in the third person : ' He goeth before them : and the sheep follow him.'[1] Christ drew out his sheep from their lower state of Evangelical perfection ; and as by increasing their perfection he increased their toil, he himself went first that they might follow, that they might not be able to bring against him his reproach to the pharisees : ' They bind heavy and insupportable burdens : and lay them on men's shoulders : but with a finger of their own they will not move them.'[2] Christ not only bears his own burdens and trials, but takes ours on his shoulders in the sight of all men.

There are many advantages in having someone to lead the way. The first is that he shows the way to those who do not know it, who generally have to pay a guide, as Tobias did. The road about which men knew least was the way to heaven, the place it was of most consequence that they should reach. David, seeing that it was impossible to find the way, cried : ' Who will bring me into the strong city ? '[3] One of the chief petitions made by Solomon the Wise in his first prayer in the newly built temple was : ' Teach (thy servants) the good way, in which they may walk.'[4] Although in ancient times there were many good paths for the faithful, as by none did they enter heaven, these could not be called perfectly good ways.

It was pride that brought about on earth man's fall and expulsion from heaven. Pride was born on earth ; that was its origin. But man could not mount again, for he stumbled and fell and had lost the skill to find the way. So Christ had to come to earth as Guide and Commander of those who were to rise to Paradise and to show them the best way. David thanked him, saying : ' They have seen thy goings, O God, the goings of my God : of my king who is in his sanctuary.'[5] The psalmist means by this that if some men do not go to heaven, it will not be through ignorance of the road, since they have seen the ' goings ' of Christ, which they can follow if they please. David calls Christ God and King to explain that he is God and man. By ' in his sanctuary ' the prophet signifies that the ' goings ' or road he teaches were those taken in his holy body during this mortal life, so that as he showed

[1] S. John x, 4.
[2] S. Matt. xxiii, 4.
[3] Ps. lix, 11.
[4] 2 Par. vi, 27.
[5] Ps. lxvii, 25.

us the way to heaven while living in his body, our bodies might follow him.

Notice two things, brother, in this 'following.' First, that Christ made new ways of virtue by which to travel to Paradise, but if men do not travel by them, these roads close themselves. Of this Jeremias says: 'The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast.'[1] This feast of celestial glory is so great that the saints must grieve at seeing how few travel to it, as though merely longing for it would raise us there.

You must also notice in following Christ that snow has fallen on his footsteps. Charity has become so cold in these days that the road to heaven by which Christ trod is covered deep in snow. Yet the malice of this world has not been able to hide the way entirely, but greater caution is needed now than ever before, for the road is unused and is under snow. But our Lord has taken care to keep it visible so that men may have no excuse.

The second advantage of our guide's going first is that he makes the path easy to walk on. If it is frozen, he breaks the ice; if there are thorns, he cuts them away; if it is very narrow, he widens it slightly. When Christ our Redeemer came to the world, the path of virtue was much more icy than it is now, so that the prophet says: 'When the days of the Lord shall come, there shall be no light, but cold and frost.'[2] There was no light in the world when Christ, the true Light, the 'Light of the world,' came. He, going on before, enlightened the path of virtue, as he tells us: 'He that followeth me, walketh not in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'[3]

Christ is also a torch to enlighten the road to heaven. Our Lord suffered the cold and frost of cruel persecutions to protect justice and virtue; to make the path straighter and shorter. That his followers might have less trouble, he passed through so many thorns which pricked and hurt him, that even his head was covered with them. Of this care for his servants the psalmist says that he gathered together the waters of the sea, as in a vessel.[4]

CHAPTER III

HOW CHRIST ENDURED OUR SUFFERINGS

God willed to mitigate the multitude of men's sufferings (symbolized by the salt sea) by enduring them himself, only leaving a

[1] Lam. i, 4. [2] Zach. xiv, 6.
[3] S. John viii, 12. [4] Ps. xxxiii, 7.

drop behind for those who were to follow him, little indeed in comparison with what he drank and underwent. I mean that he felt in himself the trials that his own would meet with, and by feeling and tasting them, freed them from much of their bitterness and difficulty.

If by casting salt into the barren waters, Eliseus healed them of their barrenness,[1] much more will Christ by casting himself, the true salt of wisdom, into the passions and torments of men, have left them sweet and made them easy to bear. This is figured in Exodus, where it is told that the Children of Israel could not drink the waters of Mara, because they were bitter, until Moses had thrown a tree into them which made them sweet.[2] Christ called himself 'green wood'[3]: he turned the waters of suffering sweet by swimming in them; he plunged into them to save those who were perishing. Since then, tribulations are sweet though very difficult to bear and bitter for men under the old Law. But they have lost their bitterness for those under Gospel Law, or if they still have some bitterness, it is little compared with what it was. They are counted sweet by those who found them bitter, since Christ our Redeemer has passed through them. Hence he said to his Apostles, after foretelling the great trials they would undergo in this life: 'Have confidence, I have overcome the world.'[4] The gloss comments on this: 'I have overcome in myself and in my own. I, who am your head, have overcome.' This ought to inspire no little confidence in his members.[5]

By these few words, if rightly understood, Christ sought to greatly strengthen his disciples, for he implied: 'Fear not, since your enemy is overcome: you have to fight one who is defeated. I have overcome your enemy the world; do not be afraid.' Christ's victory over the world and him who is called its prince (which is the same thing, for the world and the devil are allies) was symbolized by Jacob's victory over his opponent. It is written: 'Behold a man wrestled with him till morning. And when he saw that he could not overcome him, he touched the sinew of his thigh, and forthwith it shrank . . . therefore the Children of Israel, unto this day, eat not the sinew that shrank in Jacob's thigh,'[6] in

[1] 4 Kings ii. [2] Exod. xv.
[3] S. Luke xxiii, 31. [4] S. John xvi, 33.
[5] 'I do not understand those terrors that make us cry out: "Satan, Satan!" when we might say: "God, God!" Do we not know that he cannot stir without God's permission? What does it mean?' (*Life*, ch. xxvi, 27).
[6] Gen. xxxii.

memory of the combat. Jacob, the strong wrestler, typifies Christ with whom the strong man (the devil and the world) wrestled, for they were opposed to one another in every way. Christ strove to overthrow his foe and gain the victory during the whole of his life until the morning of the Resurrection. Yet our Lord's defeat was not final, though the sinew (that is, his body) became shrunken on the cross.

In memory of this victory the Children of Israel (faithful Christians) do not eat the sinew, as they do not attribute their conquests to themselves but to Christ, for it was he who overcame the world. In ourselves we never gain fresh victory, but when we triumph, we show how genuine was that of Christ.

Then, brother, spur on your sluggish body and force it to follow Christ. Remember, it is a nervous steed, afraid of the shadow of a straw, and will throw its rider into a ditch and injure him, so that unless you are prudent you will suffer more by taking to flight than you would by following Christ. Oh, how many have fallen into the pit of wrong habits which only their imagination made them fancy were unavoidable ! They think they cannot do what is possible and has almost all been done for them.[1] Christ our Redeemer, going before, as we have said, cleared the road ; blunted the thistles and thorns so that they could not prick so much ; broke the ice ; overcame the devil who is the highwayman on the road to God, and the wild beasts, or vices, who also rob men on the path. I know not what you fear ; I think you will own what the wise man writes of such as you : ' The slothful man saith : There is a lion in the way and a lioness in the roads. . . . The slothful hideth his hand under his arm-pit, and it grieveth him to turn it to his mouth ' (lest he should die of hunger). ' The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit, than seven men that speak sentences.' [2]

[1] ' The body, as you know, is very fond of comfort, and we ought to realize the great danger of pacifying it. I often wonder and never can understand how self-indulgent persons can feel so peaceful and at rest. Did the most sacred body of our great Model and Light merit less enjoyment than do ours ? Had he done aught to deserve the cruel suffering he bore ? The saints are in heaven, that is certain. Have we read of any who got there by living luxuriously on earth ? Then how can we feel so easy about doing so ? Who told us that it was right ? . . . One would suppose that there was no future world and that this was the safest way to live. Daughters, if you only knew what harm there is in this ! While the body grows sturdy, the soul becomes so enfeebled that if we saw it, we should fancy it was about to become extinct' (*Concep.* ii, 19).

[2] Prov. xvi, 13, 15, 16.

If you say that there is a lion in the way of perfection to hinder you, it is true ; but the lion is dead, for our Samson passed by and killed it ; you will find nothing there but the bees which may sting and cause you some annoyance. That will matter little, for they will also give you the honey of consolation if you suffer a little and force yourself to follow Christ in what is hard.

The chief point, and it is a fact, in the wise man's saying, is that a relaxed religious thinks he is better than seven of the rest, in spite of the many accusations they bring against him. He believes that such as they do not care for spirituality or they would not make much of what is exterior, and that he is wiser than the seven—in fact, than all the rest, for in Holy Scripture the number seven is universal, including all. I confute this conceit in the second part of this Letter, and there is need for it, because many defend their conduct by what is a broken staff.

To return to our subject : the third advantage of having a guide to follow is that it incites people to travel farther, and encourages them, especially if he has the provisions with him. Christ our Redeemer goes before on the way of perfection ; it inspires us all to see him in front of us, the first to undertake the work. This is symbolized by Abimelech who ' cut down the bough of a tree, and laying it on his shoulder and carrying it, he said to his companions : " What you see me do, do out of hand." So they cut down boughs from the trees, every man as fast as he could, and followed their leader.'[1]

We behold Christ laden with the great bough of the cross, and he tells us that we too must take up our cross of hardships and carry it until death ; what remains for us but to contend as to which can go the farthest, and carry the cross best, and follow him at once ? Otherwise, he tells us, we shall not be worthy to have him for our Lord.[2]

By going on first, he incites us to follow and promises us rest and refreshment in our trials, saying : ' Come to me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up my

[1] Judges ix, 48, 49.

[2] ' Let the Christian go forth to combat with the host of demons, and be convinced that there is no better weapon than the cross. . . . Embrace the cross, sisters, that your Bridegroom bore on his shoulders : know that your motto should be : " Most happy she who suffers most, if it be for Christ." All else should be looked on as secondary : if our Lord gives it, render him grateful thanks. . . . Remember, it is of the utmost importance—the sole aim of one beginning to practise prayer should be to endure trials and to resolve and strive to the utmost of her power to conform her own will to the will of God ' (*Castle*, M. ii).

yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart : and you shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden light.'[1] To give us confidence and draw us to follow him, our Lord bade *all* come unto him, without specifying any particular persons, for he is no acceptor of persons but of all men in general. In the same way he cried to the people in public : ' If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink.'[2] Here he calls upon those wearied by following him, laden with the burden of the flesh on their shoulders. Our Lord refreshes such souls with many consolations, telling them to take upon them the yoke of subjection as a very precious thing ; not to drag it after our feet as contemptible, but to rest it on our shoulders and our head.

Christ tells us to take it of our own will ; he does not impose it on us by force lest he should be called a tyrant but bids us take it up, and we shall soon experience how meek and lowly of heart is he whose yoke is so sweet and so anointed that it does not tire those who bear it. Of this anointing and unction of grace Isaias says : ' The yoke shall putrify at the presence of the oil.'[3]

Those who follow Christ in penance and austerities find such comfort in them that they are constrained to say with David : ' O Lord, thou . . . framest labour in commandment,'[4] as though to say : ' Thou art joking, O Lord, for I find thy yoke no burden nor do I feel its weight.' What greater humility and sweetness could there be than so to plan the burden that our Lord carries the chief part ? It requires two to bear a yoke : the one with the highest collar does most work and draws the heavier weight. Christ first undertook his part and is figured by Saul who had higher shoulders than the rest of the people and consequently, in his extreme humility and meekness, did more work. Holy Scripture goes on to say that we shall find rest to our souls in heaven if our bodies labour on earth. First it promised refreshment, meaning grace, and then joy, by which glory is to be understood. Since these many promises seem to imply that the trials would be heavy, our Lord adds that his yoke is sweet and repeats that his burden is light.

[1] S. Matt. xi, 28–30. [2] S. John vii, 37. [3] Isa. x, 27.
[4] Ps. xciii, 20. In Spanish the word rendered by ' frame ' is *fengis* and in Latin *fingis*, equivalent to the English ' feignest.'

CHAPTER IV

OF THE SLIGHT LABOUR CHRIST ASKS OF US

NOT only when he finds men follow him does Christ encourage them by the hope of better things, calling them from labour to rest, but he also calls those who labour in other ways to lighter work and a great reward. He has bidden those who labour and are heavy laden to take upon them his yoke, which is easy and light. If by this yoke they plough the ground of their bodies, forcing them to follow Christ Jesus, they will reap much fruit. As for those engaged in the labours and fatigues of this world connected with their mortal bodies, or who are burdened by the unbearable yoke of the Old Law, the weight of sin that oppresses their shoulders, or the cares of a worldly life that subject them to temporal things and make them ambitious of earthly honours by setting their mind on what passes like the wind, though they seek to dwell and remain among what is fleeting and long for what will melt away in their hands—let such souls go to our Lord, leave their arduous, useless labours, and take on themselves his fruitful, easy yoke—let their bodies follow Jesus Christ, in the fashion of all Christians, so that their souls may rejoice.

A Doctor of the Church asked how the yoke could be called sweet, though our Lord said on another occasion that the way to heaven is narrow and few go by it. This Doctor answered himself by saying: 'In process of holy living and faith, the heart being dilated, the path of God's commandments is run with unspeakable sweetness of love.'[1] Those who begin to follow Christ by austerities find the way narrow and difficult at first and their burden heavy; but by perseverance, all is overcome, and the strength it engenders makes the work much easier.

The final advantage of following a guide is that the travellers find the inn and meal prepared with no trouble of theirs. Christ our Redeemer went first not only to make the way easier, but to make ready the inn for his followers, which is just as necessary. He did this solely for his own, as he said to the Apostles only: 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself, that where I am, you also may be.'[2]

[1] This is a quotation from the Prologue of the *Holy Rule of S. Benedict.* It is preceded by the words: 'the way of salvation is not to be started but by a narrow beginning.'

[2] S. John xiv, 2, 3.

Our Redeemer here speaks as a kindly companion, for it is a point of courtesy on the part of him who goes first to prepare the lodging and meal beforehand ;[1] if the rest do not arrive, he goes out to see whether they are coming and to hasten them, and he will not eat until they are seated.

All this is implied by our Lord's words ; for besides saying that he goes to prepare a heavenly place for his followers, he adds that he will come again and, as it were, take them on his shoulders so that they may all sit at table together. The Psalmist says of this : ' Thy rod and thy staff, they have comforted me.' The staff of Christ is his cross by which he defended himself and passed through the Jordan of this world. He gives it to all the just to help them on their way, for which, like David, they thank him when, their journey over, they reach the inn of heaven he has made ready, where is the banquet of glory prepared by Christ who tells us he will minister at it.

The anointing of the head with oil of which David speaks signifies the good bed Christ makes ready in which his followers are to rest, forgetting all their past labours, wherein, for certain, there will not be wanting for our head (the superior part of our soul) the oil of spiritual gladness.

The Psalm also says that the chalice inebriates, which shows the abundance of the wine of the fruition of God. Good wine is the first thing desired by the traveller, who is dying of thirst at his journey's end. Those who follow Christ are always parched with thirst and longing to taste how sweet the Lord is, and in heaven they will drink abundantly. David also calls this chalice ' goodly ' because of the knowledge and great illumination in the souls of the saints who know God.

Lest we should think that this would only last for a single night or a short space of time, as in this world, David declares that the mercy of the Lord will follow him all the days of his life. The life of the blessed being everlasting, their days uncountable, ' all the days ' implies eternity, according to the gloss. Note that God shows perfect mercy in heaven, for though he might repay his followers by showing them his glory for a short time, yet he chooses to do so throughout eternity, ' unto length of days,' for all days will be but one in the house of God, with no night before or after to obscure the light of God. There those who followed Christ will receive his entire and perfect mercy ; not only by his

[1] ' Think of the heavenly banquet and its food, which is God himself, and of the guests, who are the angels ; raise your mind to that feast and long to be there ' (*Maxims of S. Teresa*, no. 41).

giving them more than they merited as regards glory, but that also, by his great mercy, he himself will be their great reward. This will not be obtained by any merit of theirs, and the reward will be infinite.[1]

Since, as you have seen, we gain so much by following Christ, our Letter does well in bidding you follow Jesus with your body. Do not suppose that it is enough to follow him with the imagination by meditating on his life and mysteries, for this is no following, unless your actions correspond. As S. John says: 'He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also to walk, even as he walked.'[2] The Apostle does not say we must think about how Christ walked, though that would be good, but that we must walk even as he walked, for from the moral point of view, to meditate is only to think about how we are to walk. Unless you carry this into practice, it would have been better never to have thought about it, for according to S. James, 'To him therefore who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.'[3]

I do not say this to prevent your meditating, but to warn you that it must be followed by your body's following Jesus, not by corporal imagination but by corporal deeds, for you know our Lord's saying: 'Believe the works.' It does not tell us to believe by (trust in) our *thoughts* but by *works*. Oh, how many souls trust in their thoughts and are content to think about the sacred Passion without imitating it!

Believe me, brother, and do not rely on your thoughts, however devout they may be: if, when the time comes, you fail to put them into practice, you were deceived by them.[4] Do not

[1] Ps. xxii. [2] 1 S. John ii, 6. [3] S. James iv, 17.

[4] 'We should be most vigilant in little things, taking no notice of the great works we plan during prayer, which we imagine we would perform for other people. . . . If our actions afterwards belie these grand schemes, there is no reason to believe that we should do anything of the sort. I say the same of humility and the other virtues. . . .

'When I see people very anxious to know what kind of prayer they practise . . . afraid to move or think lest they should lose any slight tenderness and devotion they feel, I know how little they understand how to attain union with God. No, sisters, no; our Lord expects *works* from us. If you see a sick sister whom you can relieve, never fear losing your devotion; compassionate her. . . . This is the true union of our will with the will of God. . . . If you are conscious that you are wanting in charity, though you may feel devotion and sweetness and a short absorption in the prayer of quiet, which makes you think that you have attained to union with God, believe me, you have not yet reached it' (*Castle*, M. v, ch. iii. The second chapter of *Conceptions of the Love of God* treats of this subject, which constantly occurs elsewhere).

resemble Miphiboseth who sat at David's table to eat with him, and, when Absalom pursued the king who fled from him, remained in Jerusalem, not willing to be the companion of his trials as he was of his feasts and pleasures. Many a bird will follow the eagle when he divides the remnant of his prey, but they leave him alone to hunt for it: so there are numbers who follow Christ in interior consolation but refuse to suffer with him, and abandon him.

CHAPTER V

ANOTHER WAY OF FOLLOWING CHRIST

THE second way of following Christ our Redeemer, mentioned in the latter part of our Letter, is more subtle, and is in addition to the first. As Christ has two natures, there are two ways of following him; for as S. Jerome says, it is one thing to imitate Christ as man and another to imitate him as God. The former resembles running: the latter, which is the more sublime, is like flying. Flight is the less tiring and the swifter. Our body runs, our soul flies, therefore Job says: 'Man is born to labour, and the bird to fly.'[1]

Our exterior man, our animal body, is born to labour and run after Christ in the way described—in self-denial and penance and poverty in all things; but our soul and superior part, a very swift bird, is born that it may fly to the Divinity, according to the second counsel of our Letter: 'And your soul to his Divinity.' Though your body may follow Jesus, do not be content unless your soul follows his Divinity.

This following of the Divinity is a grand thing, known by few and practised by fewer still; it is proper to men of angelic souls who seek God wherever they go, and keep in his presence as though they were angels. As a figure of this, the angel said to Tobias: 'Brother . . . if it please thee therefore, let us go before, and let the family follow softly after us, together with thy wife and the beasts.'[2] He must be brother to the angels, both in office and in life, who is to follow the Divinity, especially as he must love and delight in this road.

We are obliged to go by the first way even though almost reluctantly, especially if we are bound by vow; we have to drive our sluggish body on with a cudgel. But our soul, being a great lady,

[1] Job v, 7. [2] Tob. xi, 3.

demands to be asked, therefore its guardian angel persuades it by secret inspirations to be pleased with following Christ's Divinity.

This swift travelling and spiritual flight cannot be performed by worldly or womanish people (faint-hearted men), as the angel told Tobias, neither can it by animals, signifying sinners, though they may follow on the way slowly as they all wish to go to God. Nor can the natural man alone follow all that has been said of this way, for the wife (the flesh) is infirm; the followers (the senses) cannot do so either, being hindered by the crowd and bustle, nor can the animals (the natural inclinations). The spirit by the wings of desire alone must take the flight by which it follows God. Of this following S. Paul says: 'I follow after, if I may by any means apprehend, wherein I am also apprehended by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended. But one thing *I do*: forgetting the things that are behind and stretching forth myself to those that are before, I press towards the mark, to the prize of the supernal vocation of God, in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded.'[1]

The Apostle has touched excellently, though very obscurely, on this spiritual following and told all that can be said about it. He was writing, yet tells us that he was following: he was seated, yet declares he was pressing forward to show that we do not follow God by our bodily feet, which can run but a very short distance, but by the wings, or desires of the soul—energetic and well-knit—for they must not be artificial or feeble wings or they would not suffice.

The interlinear gloss thus explains S. Paul's first words: 'I follow after, if I may by any means perfectly know Christ, which is supreme blessedness, that I may see him even now as he is, or see him in the divine light in which he appeared to me on the road.' This gloss has greatly exalted the following of the Apostle, and with good reason, for we follow a person in order to know him or become more friendly on the journey. Souls follow Christ as God to know and see him by a sublime manner of knowledge and vision that greatly satisfies them. It is of this the prophet speaks: 'I will send down the rain in season.'[2] S. Augustine commenting upon this first sentence of S. Paul's thinks that it means: 'I follow that I may possess justice perfectly, since I follow it perfectly.' Certainly he who travels perfectly is a perfect follower of justice which is the first way or manner of following Christ, called corporal. Then the soul progresses and follows with the desire of being a possessor, which is of far more importance.

[1] Phil. iii, 11–15. [2] Ezech. xxxiv, 26.

He is a good traveller who observes the right doing commanded by Christ fully ; but if he wishes to taste the fruit of his labours, he desires to possess and begins to follow the Divinity of Christ, the Rewarder of those who work.

Those who thus begin to follow the Divinity of Christ to a certain extent become possessors, and commence to taste the heavenly repayment here on earth. By following the Divinity and longing for it, they draw near to Paradise ; as the wise man says : ' It is a great glory to follow the Lord : for length of days shall be received of him.'[1] It is a great glory to follow God, for as S. Augustine declares, he who wishes to possess must first follow.

I think that your soul ought not to desire to follow Christ's Divinity unless your body seeks to imitate his Humanity ; the one is the source of the other. But to practise the advice given in this Letter is a great glory, as God tells us by Jeremias : ' Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, for I am the Lord that exerciseth mercy, and judgement, and justice in the earth : for these things please me, saith the Lord.'[2]

By saying that God will add to those who follow him length of days,[3] the Sage means that God will go forth to meet them, giving them beatitude, figured by ' length of days,' a gift that lies in his hand. No one should be surprised at these words : it is only courtesy to go forth to meet an important person who visits you to make friends with you. Such souls seek God and follow him lovingly : seeing this, he goes to meet them and begins to give that for which they have so fervently asked, for as it is written : ' Wisdom inspireth life into her children, and protecteth them that seek after her, and will go before them in the way of justice. And he that loveth her, loveth life : and they that watch for her, shall embrace her sweetness.'[4]

I remember that once, when I was discussing with my spiritual director some minor matters connected with my soul, we spoke of the attention and devotion that a devout man should show regarding the Divine Office. To encourage me, as I insisted upon it, he told me that he felt such delight in reciting the praise of God at Lauds that he thought on one occasion that he was on the brink of heaven. Lauds seemed to last but a moment, and he wished it might never end.

[1] Ecclus. xxiii, 38.
[2] Jer. ix, 23, 24.
[3] Prov. iii, 2.
[4] Ecclus. iv, 12, 13.

This agrees with what we said : those who follow the Lord of Paradise draw near Paradise. The man of whom I speak had followed him in the second manner for forty years, and though he was very old, did not cease to follow Jesus by his body in severe labours and penances, though others think that, being jubilarians, they are exempt from fasts and toil.

CHAPTER VI

A FURTHER COMMENT ON S. PAUL'S WORDS

In the second clause, S. Paul says : ' I do not count myself to have apprehended ' one thing, and this is greater than all the rest : of this David says : ' One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after.'[1] S. Paul, being humble-minded, thought he had said so much of himself in declaring that he thus followed God, that in this clause he seeks to reduce himself to the state of a beginner.

That this following of God is a great thing is shown by the words of the wise man : ' What is man . . . that he can follow the King his maker ? '[2] The Apostle, minimizing his words, shows us how to imitate him, saying : ' Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before.' According to S. Ambrose, he speaks of his former merits first and then the things ' that are before,' or heavenly things, towards which he stretches himself with ardent longing.

To understand this clearly we must know that those who practise this second, perfect manner of following God, find it such a pleasant path, so refreshing and delightful on account of divine consolations, that they think all the past is worthless and almost useless trouble ; and forsaking all else, give themselves entirely to the better way they have found. But to hit the mark, they must attend carefully to the words of S. Paul, who does not say he relinquished past things, but forgot them, which means, according to the gloss, that he considered them less meritorious, for generally speaking, bodily exercises are less so than spiritual. Yet they are not to be given up for that reason, as practised with the latter, they are more humbling for the soul.

S. Paul then shows us how his desire daily pressed forward to the prize prepared for him. S. Augustine comments on this :

[1] Ps. xxvi, 4. [2] Eccl. ii, 12.

'The life of the good Christian is nothing but a desire. And that which thou desirest, thou dost not see yet; but by desiring wilt be made capable of being filled with that which thou wilt see when it comes. For by deferring it, God increases our desire, and by our desire our heart is enlarged sufficiently. Then let us desire, since we are to be filled. This is our life, that by desiring we may be qualified, and holy desires will qualify us in proportion as we curtail our longings for this world's love.'

In conclusion, S. Paul advises as many as are perfect to be thus minded, showing that he speaks to the perfect, not the imperfect, and that they must *be* of that mind, not *reason* about it, for they may be like-minded without being able to talk about it.

I had two reasons for placing this Letter in the *Third Alphabet*. The first was that I have known persons who have followed the way of meditation on the Passion set forth in the *First Alphabet* and left it to follow the present exercise. Finding it did not suit them so well as they wished and expected, they regretted the change, saying they had done wrong in forsaking the Sacred Passion and engaging themselves in what they did not understand.

I shall treat elsewhere of this change and the careful consideration it requires. I will only offer a remedy for it in the present treatise. Such persons having ceased to follow the Passion in their mind, should compensate by imitating it with their body, devoting themselves more than ever to what is exterior in it; bearing in its honour all suffering that comes to them, and conforming to it as closely as possible. In their mental prayer, let them follow the present exercise. Then let them feel sure that they have lost nothing but will do better than before.

My second and chief reason for placing this Letter here was that many people, on finding pleasure in spiritual matters, at once give up their former penances and austerities, probably because they think they cannot do both, or that the two things are incompatible; that the first practice is of little merit; that it is enough for them to have the crumb without the crust, or they wish to avoid the vain-glory apt to follow good works. They may want to keep their strength for what pleases them best or simply choose to give up the first exercise for the second.

To controvert these reasons, we must presuppose that we are talking to persons who wish to attain to the greatest possible perfection. Also that, during the present life, no traveller can reach so high a grade of perfection that he cannot rise higher. We make exception of our Lady, to whom many say this rule does not apply. But everyone else can progress from day to day, while

they have free will. Hence the gloss says of S. Paul's words: 'Not as though I . . . were already perfect.'[1] None of the faithful, though they may have made great progress, can say: 'What I have suffices for me,' because he would be leaving the road before the end of the journey. Therefore the Apostle apologises for the way he has spoken, and owns he has not reached perfection, saying: 'Not as though I had received the perfection of condignness.'

Those who are content to practise the second exercise of our Letter, omitting the first which is the following Jesus Christ with their bodies, may excuse themselves by pleading that the burden would overwhelm them, and that 'better is a handful with repose than both hands full with affliction of soul.' This is called 'pusillanimity of spirit,' from which David implores God to deliver him, saying: 'Who will give me wings like a dove and I will fly and be at rest? Lo, I have gone far off flying away; and I abode in the wilderness. I waited for him that saved me from pusillanimity of spirit, and a storm.'[2] Groundless fear and cowardly faint-heartedness have injured many, because the spiritual life requires great magnanimity.

David wished for wings to fly to God, but none other than those of the dove, which is very loving. When his soul had received them, he mounted high in perfection, and finding a certain amount of peace, he said: 'Lo, I have gone far off flying away.' He truly follows God who flies from the world, from men, and all creatures, and dwells alone. He must trust God not to allow him to forsake the one for the other, but that he may be like the valiant captain Aod, who used his left hand as well as his right,[3] the one hand being as strong and brave as the other.

Use both hands, as our Letter bids you, in following Jesus with your body and his Divinity with your soul; let both be right hands, and do not despise the left as inferior because we are more bound to the former following than to the latter: we owe our heart to God and a good example to others, and we must give them both.

No one is so misguided as to say that the two followings are incompatible, for the kingdom of God within us does not consist in eating and drinking, nor is it food and drink. It is for the worldly to indulge the body; the servants of God must chastise it and bring it to serve the spirit. The more the soul feeds, the less the body requires: if you give it food, let it be vegetables, and coarse nourishment that costs nothing, like pulse and water

[1] Phil. iii, 12. [2] Ps. liv, 7–9. [3] Judges iii, 15.

such as we read of in the first chapter of Daniel. More than that is wrong and a want of spirituality. Call to God with David: 'Deliver me from my necessities.'[1]

If you say that you have the kernel and do not want the shell, know that the former keeps good for a very short time without the latter. Since God made both, we should have the two. To avoid exterior practice for fear of vain-glory is senseless, for it does not even know how to give God his due. Besides, the vain-glory that harms us is not founded on our public actions but is in our secret being, which is of graver moment. Finally, if you do not seek to follow the way of patience, do not show a feigned spirituality. If you were truly spiritual, such bodily pleasures as fine clothes, a soft bed, delicate food and drink, would be distasteful to you. If you make use of them and make pretence of spirituality, your deeds oppose your words and you offend God more in one way than you serve him in the other.

CHAPTER VII

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN OUR PERFECTION AND THAT OF PAST DAYS

WHEN I consider the sanctity of our ancestors and that of the present day, I think that we might make a statue of all sorts and conditions of men like that of Nabuchodonosor, the head of which was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the belly and thighs of brass, the legs of iron, and the feet of iron and clay.

The golden head was the age of the new, primitive Church, of perfect sanctity, as gold is a perfect metal. The breast and arms of silver typify the second age, that after the time of the Apostles, who being very pure and untarnished, sounded forth the preaching of the Gospel and drew in all the world.

The third state was that of the martyrs, figured by brass which is a very hard metal and can endure many blows.

The fourth, that of the Doctors of the Church, was of iron, that swiftly and valiantly struck at heresies. In these days there is a kind of sanctity which not only bears no fruit in the Church nor gives a good example, but unites the iron of a valorous spirit with the clay of human weakness, the flesh and the spirit being greatly at variance with one another. It is said that this relaxation of devotion will last until the two are less friendly, for iron and clay are by nature opposed to union.

[1] Ps. lxxiv, 17.

Some people who call themselves spiritual are so misguided as to refuse to listen to those who advise them to practise poverty and penance. Worse than that, they think their counsellors do not care for interior devotion and have not attained to liberty of spirit or advanced beyond the state of beginners.

I ask those who say this to read the ninth chapter of S. Luke where they will find Christ's words : ' If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.'[1] Our Lord told all men not only to deny themselves and their opinions and desires and wills, but to take up their cross, and this daily, and follow him.

In this self-denial our Lord includes interior penitence and sorrow ; in the cross, that which is exterior ; both are needed. Let no one content himself with one since God has commanded both ; nor think the words were not addressed to him, since S. Luke tells us they were for all. Nor can it be denied that they apply to these times, for our Lord says ' daily.'

Do not go by your own opinion but follow Holy Scripture and the saints, acknowledging your inferiority. Do not eat choice food nor trust in one who advises it, but force yourself to suffer something for God, and though you have risen high in sanctity, manage to perform more penance than your brethren, either by rougher, more common clothing, or less and coarser food, or a harder, cheaper bed. Let it be done in such a way as to ' chastise the flesh,' as S. Paul calls it, not to injure it.

If you are too weak to do any of these things, at least praise them in others. Take the advice of S. Bonaventure, and leave the delicacies you might lawfully partake of, such as fruit and other dainties eaten by the unmortified. Do not take every doctor's advice under the pretext of keeping the laws of health, for you will always find that those who pay much attention to them are less healthy and penitential. Do not take it as your hobby that you shall never be ill, for kings lose their health. Since physicians and taking ample food by no means prevent the great from illness, do not be so rash as to think that you can always keep in good health, or you will be too frightened to perform many good works you would have done. If you are ill, you must be cured ; your sickness will teach you to bear with yourself patiently and you will gain the same merits as the saints won by their infirmities.[2]

[1] S. Luke ix, 23.

[2] ' Our first effort must be to cease loving our bodies : some of us are naturally self-indulgent, therefore it is no easy work. . . . We seem to think we only entered the convent in order to keep ourselves alive,

Do not incur one malady in guarding yourself against another, nor regret having something to suffer, for it will do you much good if you bear it willingly and are patient. But you should avoid, so far as possible, any illness that would prevent your prayer, for this is the worst form. Even health, if an obstacle to prayer, is very bad for you, as you ought to love all that furthers it and detest what hinders it. But all doctors say that nothing preserves the health like moderation in food, for as a rule illnesses arise more or less from eating too much. Every religious should make it his rule of health neither to eat nor drink except at the proper times in the refectory with the community, and to be very abstemious if he wishes to keep well.

To return to the chief theme of the present Letter. Make sure not to be a saint who limps after Christ, but so order your life that you may follow him both outwardly and in your heart. As Gerson says, you ought so to attend to this that if there were need, on account of weakness, to resist interior consolations, you should do so, recognizing that you are a frail vessel that cannot hold all you desire, for excess of honey might make you ill. You will understand this if you reflect upon the scandal given by the relaxation of certain devotees who ought to afford a good example. On account of some slight spiritual consolation God has granted them, they say they cannot stand and ask for dispensations. This is caused by their reluctance to do all that they can.

If you desire to be all you ought, remember that, like the wise virgins, you have to take to Christ the lamp of exterior with the oil of interior perfection ; do not be like the foolish virgins who only carried the one. Let him who wears coarse clothing, eats common food, lacks other things, lies on a hard bed, is ill shod, and practises other austerities, think that he has a lamp but is wanting in what is most necessary—the oil, unless he feels a tender devotion that makes him turn gently, lovingly and sweetly towards the Lord. Therefore in all his self-denial and penances, let him

and to nurse and pamper our bodies as well as we can. Be convinced, sisters, that you came here to die for Christ, not to indulge yourelves for him. The devil suggests that we need to take care of ourselves in order to keep the Rule. Such nuns are so exceedingly anxious to preserve their health so that they may be able to obey the Rule, that they die without ever having observed it for a month or perhaps even for a single day. . . . If the indisposition is real, speak about it and take the necessary remedies. . . . The body possesses this defect—the more you give it, the more it requires. It is wonderful how fond it is of comfort, and what pretexts it will offer to obtain it, however little needed. It deceives the unfortunate soul and prevents its making progress ' (*Camino*, ch. xi).

say to himself : ' You must thank God, brother, that you are not lacking in every way. You have a lamp : be urgent in seeking the oil of devotion for it, that you may be fit to enter to the heavenly nuptials.' If you want the bright, sweet, soft oil of devotion quickly, follow him who is engrafted and made one with the good olive of the Divinity ; he will pour out for you rivers of oil as he did for Job.[1] These, if you persevere in following him, will never fail you while the famine lasts in Israel, according to the divine promise. And more than that, you will be able, by your teaching and efforts, to fill the vessels, that is, the empty hearts of your neighbours, like the hostess of Elias. Thus you will increase and multiply and fill not the earth, but heaven. For oil rises, and makes us leave the things of earth to follow the celestial Christ, that we may the better fly after him who, like the swiftest eagle, incites us with the example of his deeds and the beak of his doctrine so to follow him that our whole exterior and interior man is healed in the Sabbath of rest (that is, recollection). In this Sabbath we must so follow his Divinity with ardent desires and heart-felt devotion that we must not neglect to follow in the footsteps of his humanity by works of penance and self-denial.

[1] Job xxix, 6.

EIGHTEENTH TREATISE

ADVISES TO SEEK GOD WITHIN OURSELVES, SAYING: 'TURN WITHIN YOURSELF OFTEN IN SILENCE AND IN HOPE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

'SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD'

As man's life should be directed to no other end than that of seeking God, and we leave this life to return to him, we must remember and obey Christ's command to all men: 'Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you.'[2]

It is wonderful to think how many things we need, as our Lord himself says in this chapter; yet he bids us ask for only one, implying that he will add the rest if we earnestly seek that. He makes this condition to incite us to strive for the chief thing, saying that the others will be added, as of secondary value.

Our Lord also shows us here that no one who does not possess him can possess anything perfectly, for as all things are additional to him, being attached to him as their Lord and Creator, it is evident that if he is missing, they do not remain. This is shown by the bees, who if their king-bee leaves them, forsake the hive and go after him to live in his company.[3]

It would do the worldly great good to recollect that if they are in mortal sin they do not justly own anything at all, not even a jug of water or a mouthful of bread, but that when they sinned they ought to have been cast forth with the beasts of the field, like Nabuchodonosor, even though they will repent to-morrow. They should repent to-day, for it would not be right to maintain on our Lord's possessions those who not only have ceased to serve him but who offend him also.

If he who will not work, should not eat, as the Apostle says,[4]

[1] Treatise XVIII, the Letter T, is given in the Spanish as: *Torna mucho sobre ti en silencio y esperanza.*

[2] S. Matt. vi, 33.

[3] The Spanish gives *rey*, 'king-bee,' instead of 'queen-bee.'

[4] 2 Thess. iii, 10.

much less should he eat who destroys the work done, or uses it for an opposite purpose, as does the sinner, who not only errs by omission, but produces new and evil works contrary to the will of God.

Blessed is the just man, even though he is monarch of the world and clothed in golden robes, for he deserves all this, which is nothing but an extra given him together with God, and the angels serve and revere him because God dwells within him. In fact, God created all things solely for the recollected, though by his great liberality he allows others to enjoy them, and does not punish sinners at once by taking his gifts from them, though he excludes them from union with him and withdraws himself, saying that he will not communicate with men who work iniquity.

To return to our subject. You must not be surprised at these words of our Lord's being called a commandment, for not only does the Son of God pronounce them in the law of the Gospel, but the eternal Father also in the law of nature imprints them on our soul, so that our instinct of well-being and superior reason always desire what is best though opposed by our wrongful liberalism. Solomon says that ' unto the place from whence the rivers come, they return, to flow again,'[1] implying that men should do the same, for Boethius states that all things delight in returning. Hence the law of nature is that our spirit should return to him who gave it, seeking the kingdom of heaven. But Christ, the King of heaven, explained this more fully in the Gospel, telling us to seek his justice also, for without that the kingdom could not be found, and would be lost.

Though all wish for the highest good naturally, some people are like the sick who refuse what benefits and want what injures them. So the worldly seek honours and power, possessions and riches, pleasures and success, leaving their salvation to God. Their fate is that of Saul when he sought for his father's asses ; he took great trouble about it, consumed all his food, found nothing after journeying through five provinces, and feared he would lose more than he had gained.

If worldlings find what they sought, they are like a boy who on catching the butterflies he hunted finds they crush to nothing in his hands. If the worldly man gets his will, his joy is short, like Jonas's, that lasted but a day, for a worm struck the ivy that shaded him, and the sun beat on his head and burnt him.[2] So wicked men are tormented here by the fire of evil desire kindled by the vice through which they thought to satisfy themselves, for

[1] Eccles. i, 7. [2] Jonas iv.

the appetite is not sated but stimulated the more when evil concupiscence is carried into action, so that men's bodies burn in this life with its malignant fire as their souls will burn in it after death, until, at the day of judgement, when they will regain their bodies, it will seize upon them anew as upon dry tinder.

Therefore let us seek God while he may be found, for we shall not labour long nor in vain considering the value of the kingdom we shall find. So great will this be that in the Divine Presence we shall be constrained to say, like the Queen of Saba: 'I did not believe them that told me, till I came myself, and have found that the half had not been told me.'[1]

In this search after the Lord which we are bound to make, there is a great difference between those who seek, on account of the manner of their quest, although their finding and what they seek are the same. Some, like the shepherds, seek our Lord in the crib by humility and poverty; others, like the kings, inquire of theologians, and study the Holy Scriptures; some, with our Lady, go to the temple to seek him with prayers and offerings; others make pilgrimages like the two disciples to whom he showed himself in the guise of a pilgrim.

In these and other ways those who desire God are wont to seek him, and he is so courteous and benign that, to save them trouble, he goes forth to meet them by whatever road they came, consoling each according to the special virtue he practised for our Lord's sake, and giving a spiritual delight and peace that satisfies the desire with which he sought God. Though the searcher may have performed only some very insignificant good deed in his honour, our Lord goes to meet him with open arms as though he had stood in great need of it. Therefore it is said of uncreated Wisdom: 'Wisdom . . . is easily seen by them that love her, and is found by them that seek her. She preventeth them that covet her, so that she first sheweth herself unto them.'[2]

Wisdom is said to prevent them that covet her because God gives them the first grace, that is called prevenient, by which men seek him, and Christ shows himself first to them because he bestows it on them more by his mercy and divine predestination than on account of their merits.

Although all the ways described of seeking God and others of the same kind are very good, yet I think the best is that a man should seek him in his own heart, for it is written: 'I found

[1] 3 Kings x, 7. [2] Wisdom vi, 13, 14.

much wisdom in myself, and I profited much therein.'[1] And our Lord says : ' Lo, the kingdom of God is within you.'[2]

If it is within us, it seems a needless delay and deviation to go outside ourselves to seek it, withdrawing and distracting our attention. Let us like the Magdalen return frequently to the sepulchre of our heart, though the other women and disciples go away. Magdalen means ' magnify,' and is our will, which magnifies and extols God. It should often return to the sepulchre where Christ reposes after the trials of his Passion, that is, in the heart of him for whom he died. The disciples are our five senses that withdraw from this practice, for they cannot attain to it. The women are the imagination, the fancy, and the sensitive memory, which are not needed. That which remains there chiefly is our will, that like another Magdalen, sighs and hopes to find what it has lost, and returns again and again to the same spot—the heart —to which our Letter admonishes us to return frequently in silence and in hope.

Since our Lord tells us to knock and it shall be opened, and directs us where to knock, it would be well for us to do so at his nearest house, which is ourselves. For though his Majesty has many dwellings, we shall find him sooner in the nearest, without wandering about to holy places or shrines, or other lands. For wherever a man may be, he should retire into himself to find God, as the wise man counsels : ' Drink water out of thy own cistern, and the streams of thy own well.'[3]

In these few words the sage mentions a cistern, a well, and streams. They surpass one another, for a well is better than a cistern, and streams surpass a well. By this he typifies three classes of people : beginners have a cistern ; proficients a well from a spring ; and the perfect have streams from which they supply others. It is to the latter that the wise man alludes in the words that follow : ' Let thy fountains be conveyed abroad, and in the streets divide thy waters.'[4]

[1] Ecclus. li, 22. [2] S. Luke xvii, 21. [3] Prov. v, 15.

[4] *Ibid.* 16. S. Teresa tells us, in ch. xiv of her *Life*, that she delighted in thinking of her soul as a garden in which our Lord walked to gather the little flowers of the virtues. Her classification of prayer in ch. xi, in which she speaks of the different ways of watering the garden, seems to have been suggested by this passage. She says : ' I think I have either read or heard of this comparison ; but as my memory is bad, I do not know where or on what occasion. . . . The beginner must look upon his soul as a garden wherein our Lord may take his delight, but in a soil unfruitful and abounding with weeds. His Majesty roots up the weeds and has to plant good herbs. . . . We have, as good gardeners, by

It should be noted that the sage did not compose this sentence without a hidden meaning, though to the ordinary reader it may seem ill-arranged, for a well or streams never come from a cistern. The cistern only collects the rain and has no water of its own, but the human heart has a natural inclination for divine grace and devotion. But sublime grace must first rain upon it, or it will merely seem like dry earth prepared as a cistern to collect the drops of rain and dew poured into it. These it may hold in such quantity as to become a well, for the natural appetite of the soul for God is roused in this manner, together with its spirit of interior devotion that before had been dry and withered.

These resemble frost, which if not visited by sunshine or rain turns to a crystal so hard that a cistern could be made of it; but if the sun or rain come, the frost melts and a well or even streams could be formed if it was full of water. In something of the same way the soul that is not very hardened or hopeless, though it seems a dry and empty cistern, can receive the influence and pure water sent to it by our Lord if it turns within itself, for its natural longing is thus revived, and since the heart is like a deep well, it receives much grace which, remaining within it, produces devotion and love for God. This will increase until the heart contains a fountain of living water of tender devotion that springs and rises to eternal life. By returning to the fount from which it rose, it receives the favour of eternal grace. This is done by a man's entering into himself to rise from himself to God; this no one can do without first retiring into himself. The greater the force he uses and the more deeply he enters, the higher will he mount, for he who humbles himself in this way is exalted. He is like a ball; the more forcibly it is thrown to the ground, the higher it rebounds, or it resembles water that rises up in proportion to the depth it falls, or men who jump and bend a little first to leap the farther.

the help of God to see that the plants grow and to water them carefully. . . . It seems to me that the garden may be watered in four ways: by water taken out of a well, which is very laborious; or by water raised by means of an engine and buckets drawn by a windlass—it is a less troublesome way than the first and gives more water; or by a stream or brook . . . or by showers of rain, when our Lord himself waters it.' The Saint explains by this the four degrees of prayer (*Life*, ch. xi). S. Teresa says that by water she means tears, or in default of them, interior devotion and tender feelings (*Ibid.* ch. x).

CHAPTER II

HOW THIS LETTER APPLIES TO BEGINNERS AND PROFICIENTS

IF we apply this Letter to the beginners I mentioned, it means that they should return to themselves and take courage, renewing the struggle and not giving themselves up as lost, though they may feel very wearied in this exile.

Let them remember that beginnings are always difficult, and that Elias bade his servant return to look at the sea seven times before it rained. For we must often look back at our past life and shed bitter tears of sorrow if we are to enjoy sweet and heavenly tears hereafter. They are not lightly given and we must first keep silence, which the gloss on Isaias declares means patience ; to the patience required by beginners must be joined the hope of obtaining some good result by the help of God, for this is no work of man. Nor do man's powers suffice for it unless the Lord holds forth his hand to produce silence in order that we may listen to his Majesty, as when Paul rose up and with his hand bespoke silence.[1]

Our aid is the hand of God that makes us keep silence and listen to what he, without the sound of words, speaks in our hearts, as the Psalm says : ' I will hear what the Lord will speak in me : for he will speak peace unto his people : and unto his saints : and unto them that are converted to the heart.'[2]

Another translation gives that God ' will speak peace unto them that turn to him,' which implies that to be converted to the heart or to God is identical, since the latter includes recollecting oneself and retiring into one's interior. No one can realize the benefits of the advice given in this Letter except those proficients in its practice who do indeed return often into themselves, for they taste great sweetness in God, who gives them sleep and quietude and makes them peaceful, which is the meaning of ' speaking peace,' for God's words are works of much efficacy. There is a great difference between our speech and action, but none between his, for his word is all-powerful ; it is as easy for him to act as for us to speak, and indeed, much easier. We cannot talk without undergoing many changes, but God does all things while remaining immutable.

Proficients have a very spiritual manner of interior action that consists in retiring into themselves and remaining in their own company, to which the words of the Apostle apply : ' Working

[1] Acts xiii, 16. [2] Ps. lxxxiv, 9.

with silence, they would eat their own bread.'[1] Such souls act more in God than in themselves: he is their daily bread that rather increases than satisfies their hunger. Their chief effort should be to keep their heart in silence that they may eat more peacefully and may enkindle the hope of tasting divine grace more fully. They should do three things: retire into themselves if they had grown careless respecting practice and recollection of heart; preserve interior quiet, keeping the profound and divine silence preserved by the disciples while with their risen Lord on the sea-coast;[2] and thirdly, should renew in themselves, by realizing and quickening it, the hope of God's grace, so that they may be able to say: 'In peace in the self same, I will sleep, and I will rest: for thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope.'[3]

Isaias says on this point: 'Thus saith the Lord God, the holy One of Israel: If you return and be quiet, you shall be saved: in silence and in hope shall your strength be.'[4] The prophet must have prized these words highly, as he specially mentioned that they came from the holy One of Israel, which was not necessary because God spoke by the mouth of his prophets. Isaias emphasized them as being peculiarly suitable to us, so that we might note and impress them on our memory.

The gloss says of this silence that it must be reposeful, and our hope must be firmly fixed on God, for as Jeremias declares: 'It is good to wait with silence for the salvation of God.'[5] The Letter with which the prophet prefaces this sentence in his third alphabet means to sweep or cleanse with a brush, for this silence before God who knows what we require is a purifying of the house in which he is to dwell, by which we should imitate David, who says: 'I meditated in the night with my own heart: and I was exercised and I swept my spirit.'[6]

According to Richard, meditation concentrates its purpose on one subject. It may be said that there are two kinds of meditation; the one is concerned with created things, the other with uncreated, like that of which David speaks here; the latter is a vehement application of the heart to God alone. It contains nothing that can be spoken about, therefore the prophet did not mention the subject, but declares that it was in the night and speaks of it elsewhere as the light in his pleasures,[7] because this secret recollection and application of the intention to God alone

[1] 2 Thess. iii, 12. [2] S. John xxi, 12. [3] Ps. iv, 9, 10.
[4] Isa. xiii, 15. [5] Lam. iii, 6. [6] Ps. lxxvii, 7.
[7] Ps. cxxxviii, 11.

delights the soul in a hidden manner very perceptible to itself. Hence the Psalmist calls it ' night ' and ' light ' because he cannot explain it to others.

David states that he meditated with his heart because meditation on created things is *in* the heart, but the higher form is made *by* the heart which applies itself wholly to God. It may be compared to the beggar who stands silent before the rich man, showing his need rather by action than by word, or to the dog who stands by the table, very alert and watchful, wagging his tail and raising his head, seeming to ask by his movements for what he wants. Do not be surprised at my comparing a man who prays to a dog, for you will find there is nothing that so plainly typifies this kind of prayer, and it was not without mystery that the Canaanite woman, ardent in prayer, said that the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the master's table. Notice that the dog by the table is very animated and watchful and seems as though he would jump on to it, besides giving vent at times to a kind of sigh to attract people's attention. So, when you draw near to the table of prayer that S. Francis used to call ' the round table ' of his devout friars, and Holy Scripture names the most pure table prepared in the Lord's sight—when you come to the table where our Lord sups with his own, forget all else like the dog, and approach with great longing like another Daniel, ' the man of desires.' Like the dog, you must direct all your exterior and interior man with profound attention to him who is seated at this table, who is God : you must keep silence, for it is most seemly, and if you are not given what you ask for at once, raise your hopefulness and give a sigh or silent cry from your heart in secret, so that while saying nothing you may ask by your actions, for it is written that ' the Lord will not afflict the soul of the just with famine.'[1]

David also says that he was exercised, for this matter requires practice, and he swept his spirit, which the gloss explains as purging his soul, so that no dust of human thoughts should remain that had not been swept from it by the bundle of twigs of holy desires that form the broom.

Perhaps this is what the Abbot Isaac meant by his explanation of the way in which Christ bade us pray. ' We pray in our closet when, ridding our heart completely of all the clamour of thought and cares, in a secret, intimate manner we call to God. We shut the door when, with closed lips, we silently pray to him who scrutinizes hearts, not voices ; we pray in secret when we make known our petitions only to God, with attentive heart and soul

[1] Prov. x, 13.

so that the powers that are against us cannot know for what we ask; and this is to pray with supreme secrecy.'

CHAPTER III

HOW THE PERFECT PRACTISE THE ADVICE OF THIS LETTER

THE perfect retire within themselves in a higher manner; their silence is more perfect and efficacious; the hope their souls possesses is stronger and more lasting, for they expect at every step to find what they desire.

It is difficult to explain how they surpass proficients. It is said of the latter that they turn from their cares and distractions to their own hearts in order to keep spiritual silence in which they may await divine grace: of the perfect it is said that they turn above themselves from themselves; for in the one case a man turns into himself and in the other he turns above himself.

In order to turn above himself, he must first be with himself, as he has to find and use self as a ladder by which to turn above it, which adds to recollection a new operation of the soul, being an observation of this recollection: a sort of watchfulness of its proceedings that is not a distraction of the mind but a cogitation, for it does not disturb silence but scrutinizes self as a man who keeps silence purposely with firm resolution, because strength is required to bear away the kingdom of heaven with violence. Sometimes such force is used as to cause severe headache and watering of the eyes, either through brain fatigue or the depression it must cause to the vital spirits.

This concentration of the mind on recollection cannot be borne for long and must be used with discretion, and when the head begins to ache should be relaxed and discontinued, and the soul should be content with simple recollection. To remedy fatigue, the powers of the mind and senses should not be used nor should the mind attend to any matter but remain in quiet repose in which the heart seems to sleep. This will cure the headache caused by prayer.

What shall we say of the grace that makes itself felt in this twofold exercise in such a way that the will is so ignited that a serene flame of unspeakable peace is felt within the breast? It closely resembles the fires of this world, except that it is painless and so delightful that the heart longs to be burned by it for ever.[1]

[1] 'O Lord, how many kinds of fire inflame men's hearts in this life! What cause have we for fear! Some of these ardours consume the soul,

This state enlightens and teaches the mind as though it held the key of wisdom, but the knowledge seems included and condensed in one subject or word with extreme brevity, for it is not diffuse, nor does it distract the heart. It makes no revelations nor produces empty visions, but the mind is so illuminated that if the recipient speaks or thinks or writes of God at the time, without an effort he at once emits sublime truths.

The memory, at peace and undistracted, feels that it would be easy to remember whatever it desired. The breast, and sometimes the whole being, feels as though the vital spirit and bodily powers withdrew into the interior. More than that, a wonderful inflation is experienced with which the soul is filled as a globe is when one breathes into it. The breast especially has been felt to be so filled as to swell above its natural size in order to give room for the grace received, yet no pain is felt, for the unction bestowed makes it stretch gently.

It is not easy for men to attain to such graces, nor does God bestow them at once ; for they must be preceded by many years of mental prayer. Moreover the practice here recommended of turning within one's self must be constantly carried out. To show you how recollection gains by this, remember how a vineyard is sometimes protected by fear of its owner, for thieves do not enter because they believe he is there : if they do, he sees them from afar and rushes to turn them out. Sometimes the guardian really is in the vineyard and gives notice that the robbers should be arrested before they enter. According to S. Bernard, the vineyard is our soul ; its guardian is watchfulness over recollection, which is feared by the gang of thieves—the thoughts—which, as they have often been ousted return rarely, and as they are less importunate, the attention is not so wearied but enjoys a peaceful repose that keeps the soul recollected. Yet sometimes the thoughts intrude because the owner of the vineyard was absent or forgot and went to sleep ; they enter secretly and begin to steal the fruit of the soul, but the guardian runs to the spot, crying : ' No more, no more ! '

Such a man would have kept a very different kind of guard if he had been prudent ; like a watch-tower he would have been on the alert to stop such ravages, or like the sacred animals that had eyes on every side, or him who said : ' I am upon the watch-tower of the Lord, standing continually by day : and I am upon my

yet others purify it and prepare it to enjoy thee for ever.' (*Exclam.* ix). S. Teresa frequently uses the comparison of a fire or furnace, spark or brazier in describing a high state of prayer.

ward, standing whole nights.'[1] The gloss comments on this: 'In continual contemplation day and night, he was prepared to hear and speak as he was bidden.'

To make the prophet's words clearer, we must notice that the Lord's watch-tower is recollection, for the aim of the devout in practising it is solely to watch and contemplate God the better. To stand upon this watch-tower is to turn seriously into oneself, as I said.

The prophet says he stood by means of the divine silence that lifts a man or draws him nearer to hear what is of God, like a spring that grows fuller if its conduits are stopped. So the soul, if the senses are sealed by silence, stands, and is raised to God. To be in this state for days and nights may be understood to the letter, for the devout should never intentionally relinquish this care. Our Letter of the Alphabet uses the word 'much' not only to induce us to turn into ourselves interiorly with the greatest attention and energy, but to take much time for it, keeping God present vividly and profoundly in our memory. The Abbot Isaac says of this: 'The intention should always be fixed on God so that the monk may breathe him in, for a slight withdrawal from this highest good would be a harmful fall and imminent death. And when the soul is grounded on this actionless repose and detached from all passions, combined with this concentration of heart on the one and highest Good, then the command of the Apostle will be fulfilled: "that men pray in every place, lifting up pure hands without anger and contention."'[2] Of a soul thus pure it may be said that its senses are absorbed and its earthly habits reformed so as to become spiritual and angelic: hence, whatever such a man endures or says or does will become most pure and simple prayer.

To incite us to imitate the shepherds who were watching and keeping their nightly vigils beside their flocks near the place in which our Saviour was born, the saintly Abbot Isaac says: 'Not only did they keep vigil, but they kept guard as well.' The recollected man watches through the night to keep guard over the flock of his senses in order to drive away the evil thoughts that come to disturb him; but he must turn his attention upon himself and notice what he is doing, and remember that he is keeping guard. Let him not be as one half dead, as though it mattered little whether or no he recollected himself, that is, kept vigil. Let him reflect upon his recollection and be more vigorous and earnest and keep prudent watch over it. Notice that this second kind of

[1] Isa. xxi, 8. [2] 1 Tim. ii, 8.

recollection usually follows the first on account of the fresh grace won by the soul's attention to itself, by means of which the soul should persevere in this practice.

To understand the third state more clearly, know that it is founded on perfect recollection aided by the second which is a lively attention concentrated upon this recollection, the third state being a simple memory of God alone, whose presence we realize with no further aid. Persevere in this as long as possible, for if you do, it will gain you great graces and God will reveal to you things that are sublime, as the wise man says: 'He set his eye upon their hearts to shew them the greatness of his works: that they might praise the name which he hath sanctified.'[1]

These words refer to our first fathers, recalling the state of perfection in which our Lord placed them and the high degree of spirituality he bestowed on them. The wise man is not here speaking of the eyes of the body, for he puts 'eye' in the singular, but of that of which Christ says: 'If thy eye be single, thy whole body shall be lightsome.'[2] This eye, which is a most concentrated attention or intention, must be fixed on our hearts if we wish to resemble in any way those who lived in a state of innocence. It is not much to ask that we should imitate them, for God gives greater grace to us, though we have not their advantage of original justice. Therefore let us fix our attention on our heart if we wish to see what great works God will perform in it and to praise the name of the sanctification he will produce in our soul. We are not told here to praise the sanctification itself, but its name, for little can be told of it in comparison with what it really is.

If those who practise this exercise grow careless, God himself arouses and invites them to it, particularly when their attention is set on other matters, so that their soul may return to recollection, though they do not cease to attend to and understand the rest, for this exercise does not hinder but perfect all else. And as the soul that practises it returns to it from other affairs, we can say that it is not difficult for the recollected to pray much, for all else turns to its good and works for its welfare. For this all things co-operate, as, besides other matters to which the soul attends, it goes forth to receive this in which the Holy Ghost is concerned and works, persuading hearts to love God.

Such souls should take special care to follow the advice of S. Paul: 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness: without which no man shall see God. Looking diligently lest any man be wanting to the grace of God.'[3] So far as possible we must preserve the

[1] Ecclus. xvii, 7, 8. [2] S. Matt. vii, 22. [3] Heb. xii, 14, 15.

peace of recollection and the holiness of this exercise in all we do, for if we are zealous, the grace of the Holy Ghost may be plentifully bestowed on us, as he gives beyond measure and even more generously in spiritual than in temporal matters.

The Apostle also tells us to look diligently lest we 'be wanting to the grace of God.' Oh, what sublime words! What wonderful advice for all spiritual persons, in whose hearts it should be engraved! Oh, most appropriate sentence! Let men look diligently lest any 'be wanting to the grace of God.' Miserable creatures that we are, we complain that grace is wanting because we do not feel it. S. Paul tells us to look diligently lest *we* be wanting to grace, proving that it is always we who fail rather than divine grace, for the wise man says: 'He that awaketh early to seek her shall not labour: for he shall find her sitting at his door,'[1] waiting to see whether we shall go out to seek her, since she comes to our house for us. The Bridegroom will not fail the foolish virgins nor close the door to them saying he does not know them, unless they first fail him by going to buy the oil of sinners that they ought to detest.

CHAPTER IV

THAT THE ADVICE OF THIS LETTER IS ABHORRENT TO SINNERS

HAVING shown how the righteous must observe this Letter, it is easy to demonstrate that the wicked neglect it. They differ on three points: some turn inwardly on themselves but not in silence; others stand at the door of their interior that they have not entered and are not silent; others are far away and cry out. This will show you that men err in spiritual matters in three ways.

The first class of souls err by not practising the interior life as they ought; the second think they are spiritual and are not; the third simulate it hypocritically, and these are far from it. The first, who enter into themselves but are not silent, are those who have many feelings about God and at once want to make them public and talk about them, making their sanctity known even to those who want to hear nothing about it, like the hen who startles the household to show everyone she has laid an egg.

We know that Moses spoke less after God had talked with him than before, and did not wish to speak on divine matters until an aid was given to speak for him. He thus gave an example to spiritual men who should say little of their consolations from God,

[1] Wisdom vi, 1.

and when they are bound to manifest them, should treat of them as though they referred to others : let them give examples of such things from the Scriptures to prevent other people from guessing the truth. The holy child Samuel would not tell Heli the priest what God had said to him without much entreaty and persuasion. King Ezechias was much to blame for showing the treasures of his palace and God's house to strangers. This warns you to take advice and keep a prudent silence about both your natural graces and those you acquire through contemplation.

The second class of people, who I said were at the door and had not thoroughly entered into themselves, are those who think that what they feel comes from God, while it really comes from their own imagination which gathers force as it broods upon itself. With the small amount of spiritual desires they possess, they begin to cry out, saying that they cannot contain themselves and it relieves them. Others weep bitterly or give deep sighs, or fall to the ground as though dead, or tremble, or make other movements. These are chiefly caused by their own imagination, though they are not sinful, for good desires and fervour affect their heart which beats violently.[1] But the safest plan is to keep silence, neither giving cries nor groans nor any other very noticeable outward sign, for all these are liable to evil suspicions. Therefore the devout sometimes use such force to conceal their inward feelings that blood flows from their mouth and nostrils, and they suffer intense pain in their shoulders and head by repressing the vehement agitation of their heart.

The remedy for this is to pray very quietly, and when you feel any of these symptoms, try to moderate them at once, for it will be impossible if they increase.

The third class of people who simulate sanctity are far from God and from their own interior, and very closely connected with the devil. They resemble a woman living in the world whom I knew, who wanted to become a saint very quickly to gain the name of one. She fasted entirely from food on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, affected to be in ecstasy, talked to the saints, and concocted prophecies which were often fulfilled. She

[1] On this subject S. Teresa writes : ' I think I said that spiritual consolations are sometimes connected with the passions. These feelings of devotion produce fits of sobbing ; I have even heard that sometimes they cause a compression of the chest and uncontrollable exterior motions violent enough to cause bleeding of the nose and other painful effects. . . . There appears some reason for comfort in it because, as I said, all ends in the desire to please God and to enjoy his presence ' (*Castle*, M. iv, ch. ii).

moistened with water the same parts of her body as those that were bound in Christ and said they sweated, and started making a wound in her side with a pair of scissors. Things came to such a pitch that she did things during her ecstasies that surpassed human strength, and said it was through aid that was given her from without to perform them whenever she wished. The worst of it was that, after some time, finding great pleasure in these proceedings, she felt convinced that they all came from God and that he had vouchsafed to grant her desire, and she was certain that she was in no way deceived. But God, who does not wish the death of a sinner, showed her mercy. One day, when she was alone, he sent from heaven a ray of light that transpierced her heart, and from its midst a voice said gravely : ' Do penance, unhappy woman.' She instantly realized that all the past had been an imposition, and was completely liberated from it, never returning to it in any way. She resolved to go to confession, and sought out a strange priest who was travelling through the place to whom she revealed all her folly. She then gave herself ardently to mental prayer, and it is a marvellous thing that in a few years she attained to great perfection by means of the consolations granted her by God, so that she found him more ready to help her to do right than the devil had been to aid her in evil.

There are other people who observe the counsel of this Letter in vain, for they attend carefully to themselves in outward things, keeping recollection in their exterior, their hands clasped, their habit duly arranged, their hood drawn over their eyes, their head bowed down ; they walk with measured steps and seem to live according to their Rule. They never speak or ask or answer a question ; their eyes, kept under control, gaze in front of them ; they are highly mortified, serene, and reserved. They think, therefore, that they are recollected and self-concentrated, for they make a study of their conduct. If they do this in order to be thought religious, it is the work of the devil who is highly self-concentrated, for all his actions are directed to his own praise and good reputation. If these religious act thus so as to give a good example to others, they are not concentrated on themselves but on others whose idols they hope to be, forgetting interior recollection which draws all a man's aims to it and requires his whole care. It is more anxious to turn the soul than the body to its interior, as David says : ' My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God ; when shall I come and appear before the face of God ? My tears have been my bread day and night, whilst it is said of me daily : Where is thy God : these things I remembered and poured out

my soul in me : for I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God.'[1]

This thirst of David for the Son of God, who is called the living fount that springs from the Father's bosom—this thirst that he says made him weep and drink his tears, and the longing that he felt to come and appear before the face of God, had so weakened and unnerved him that it seemed to him as though all things asked him where was his God, for it is a well-known fact that we fancy others are talking about what we greatly desire and think about. As a means of going to God and his wonderful dwelling-place, the human heart, David says that he remembered and poured out his soul in him, as advised by the present Letter.

That this retiring into oneself is founded on the soul's recollection is clearly shown by S. Jerome's translation, which gives for the second verse : ' I remembered these things and poured my soul out on me, for I must go to the bower of trees ; I will keep silence until I reach the house of God.'

The bower that gives some coolness and protection from the burning sun is the conscience of the newly devout in which he must seek refuge from the distracting business matters of the world. He will find a powerful remedy in the remembrance of supernatural things, in turning within himself and pouring out his soul in him, leading himself back to his interior ; and if he perseveres in keeping silence he will come to the house of God. This is the conscience of a proficient, which must be a house of prayer, not a cave of thieves—mundane cares that rob us of spiritual riches and withdraw us from holy practices. Therefore let beginners, as this Letter counsels, turn much into themselves, regretting their evil life in the past, and keep silence, that is, patience, in the hope of making progress. Let proficients turn into their interior from the distractions of their heart in most profound silence and in the hope of the actual grace which they expect to receive speedily from their bountiful Lord. Let the perfect enter within themselves, keeping guard over recollection with earnest hearts directed to God, deepest silence as regards all created things, and such firm, strong hope that, united to their desire, it transports them to celestial things.[2]

[1] Ps. xli, 3–5.

[2] S. Teresa uses the terms beginners, proficients, and the perfect in the same way as Fray Osuna in her writings.

NINETEENTH TREATISE

TREATS OF HUMILITY, SAYING: 'LET YOUR HUMILITY INCREASE SO THAT YOU MAY MAKE GOOD PROGRESS.'[1]

CHAPTER I

HUMILITY THE FOUNDATION OF ALL

THOSE who consider that they understand what is fundamental may object that this chapter should have come in the First Treatise, for humility should resemble the foundations and excavation for a building, every exercise being erected on it, and it should be the root of every tree that is to bear fruit. If charity is to be the root, then let humility be the dung that maintains trees and renders them fruitful. It symbolizes salt which flavours every kind of food and is therefore ordained to be offered with all sacrifices, for nothing should be offered to God without humility, nor can anything attain to him unaided by it. For all that is outside the ark of humility perishes; that alone upholds those who enter its shelter, so that humility is needed for all spiritual exercises, being their very beginning, as S. Cyprian declares.[2] It is the first entry into religion as it was Christ's first step in this world. Then let all who wish to live devoutly esteem themselves humbly and not presume to raise themselves to what is exceptional, for humility has always been the foundation of sanctity.

Though this virtue is always needed, it is specially so in the more sublime exercises, and he who is raised highest requires it most, because the taller the tree, the deeper goes the root, and the loftier the building, the more profound its base. You will find that greatest saints have always been the most humble.

The chapter on humility is placed here because this virtue closely resembles recollection, so that they might both quote S.

[1] U, the nineteenth letter of the Spanish Alphabet, is here represented by the word *Umilidad*.

[2] 'The whole foundation of prayer must be laid in humility, and the more a soul humbles itself in prayer, the more God lifts it up' (*Life*, ch. xxi).

John's words : ' He must increase, but I must decrease.' The purpose of humility is to empty man of self : recollection does nothing but dislodge self to give a larger place to God in our heart. Both these virtues give in one way what they take in another, as S. Paul's words show : ' Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves.'[1] Again : ' I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me.'[2] Thus the humble are raised to the sublime heart of God, and the recollected receive him abundantly, so that S. Peter's words apply to both : ' The hidden man of the heart in the incorruptibility of a quiet and meek spirit, which is rich in the sight of God.'[3]

Quietude is ascribed to recollection, meekness to humility, and both virtues are proper to a man of a sincere, spiritual, and loving heart who seeks solitude to find God who dwells within us, and having found him, penetrates still deeper, casting out all that is earthly. Such a man will gain great riches in God's sight, but others do not understand this.

S. Peter's description of the ' man of the heart's ' hiding himself in incorruptibility is not without mystery, for the true incorruptibility of the soul is humility, in which spiritual men hide themselves so completely that they close the doors against worldly vanities, praise and honour, lest the latter should find them.

The heart of the sinner is called a broken vessel that cannot contain divine things, but the heart of the just does not leak ; it is joined and mended with humility so that no drop can be lost by wandering attention. This vase of the heart, repaired by humility and restored so as to hold its own small measure of contents, must be so formed that, without breaking, it can enlarge automatically to receive divine grace, according to the advice of our Letter : ' Let your humility increase.'

Some think that humility is pusillanimity of heart and the low, mean-spirited disposition of men of little mark, inclined to petty interests. Others imagine it is an appearance of weak health, commonplace speech, manners, and clothes. It is sometimes thought that the faint-heartedness and timidity seen in some which prevents their attempting great things is humility. Others believe that to be wanting in ability and not to use but to conceal what we have is humility. Such things are not humility and have nothing to do with it.[4]

[1] 2 Cor. ii, 5. [2] Phil. iv, 13. [3] S. Peter iii, 4.

[4] Regarding this, S. Teresa writes : ' Beware, daughters, of a certain kind of humility suggested by the devil which is accompanied by great anxiety about our past sins. He disturbs souls in many ways by this means,

In order to conjecture the greatness of this virtue, we must know that humility and magnanimity are such loving sisters and companions that one is not to be found without the other. They are like two wings by which the bride, the soul, flies to God and to the solitude of contemplation. Poverty of spirit does not end in contempt for earthly things, but in possession of what is divine, and humility results not in despising honours, but in exaltation in spiritual graces.

Vines are pruned of their superfluous shoots not to impoverish them but to make them bear finer fruit, and those who are really poor in spirit divest themselves of worldly goods the better to abound in higher things, as he knew who said : ' God hath made me to grow in the land of my poverty.'[1] So it is with humility, which, according to S. Augustine, is true poverty of spirit growing in divine things as it decreases in those of this world. If the humble despises self, it is in order to increase in value in the sight of God, who raises the poor in spirit from the dunghill of humility. If he does not wish to act on his own judgement, it is that he may succeed the better, for it is the wisdom of humility to make use of other's wisdom without losing its own. If the humble do not take part in this world's business, they are occupied in spiritual matters instead, which require a man's whole intellect, freed from all else. If they care nothing for dress, or society functions, the fashions, friendship with those of high rank, or ambition, they leave them all that they may engross and centre themselves entirely in better things, as the gloss says of the words of Job : ' Who setteth up the humble on high, and comforteth with health those

until at last he stops them from receiving Holy Communion by such thoughts as : " Am I worthy of it ? Am I in a good disposition ? I am unfit to live in a religious community." The evil one thus stops Christians from prayer. . . . Everything such a person says seems to her on the verge of evil and all her actions appear fruitless, however good in themselves. She becomes discouraged—thinking she can do nothing right, for what is good in others she fancies is wrong in herself. At one time it may be a virtue to think ourselves thus sinful and at another time it may be a most dangerous temptation ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxix). ' Timid, weak, and cowardly thoughts, such as, " If I follow this course, will harm come to me ? Dare I begin this work ? Would it not be presumptuous ? Is it right for one so faulty as myself to speak on sublime spiritual subjects ? Will not people think too well of me if I make myself singular ? Extremes are bad, even in virtue ; sinful as I am, I shall only fall the lower. Perhaps I shall fail and be a source of scandal to good people ; such a person as I am has no need of peculiarities " ' (*Castle*, M. i, ch. ii, 11).

[1] Gen. xli, 52.

that mourn.'[1] The sublime soul of the humble rises above transitory things, and when they mourn, they are taken from danger.

Then, brother, gaze on this grand virtue ; look on this grain of mustard seed and sow it in the garden of your conscience. Holy Scripture calls it small in the eyes of men : in God's sight it is ' greater than all herbs ' (and all other spiritual exercises), so that you may rejoice in its branches, that is, its grades. But I do not know whether you can mount to the top, which is very lofty and to which, among pure creatures, she alone rose who in her humility after having styled herself God's servant, had the magnanimity to ask that the eternal Son of God might be her Son by nature. S. Bernard cries astonished : ' What humility is this ! So sublime that it knew not how to value honours nor to reject glory.'

This will show you what the growth of humility is : on the one hand it means decrease, on the other sublime grandeur if it is genuine. For as S. Augustine says, the measure of its height is the depth of its lowliness, for its height and depth are equal, and the two ought to increase together to be satisfactory. Your increase in humility shows your own decrease ; your progress shows your growth. Be not surprised that your progress is called your decrease, for humility is a torch that decreases as it is consumed. When you become perfect you may diminish in presumption, according to Ezechiel the prophet's words : ' The chests of the treasury were to be low in height though set on the highest place,' meaning that holy men, who are coffers of the treasury of God, should be the more humble in proportion as they are exalted.

Those who do not remain humble and increase in humility fail like Judas and Saul to come to a good end, for though they rose, they rose only to fall. If they rose, it was by the ladder of humility, for Saul was told that because he was lowly in his own eyes, God had chosen him as the head of the nation. That he fell later on was through his own fault, because he descended from the ladder of humility. He forgot his own low rank when he saw himself promoted ; he ought, as the wise man counsels, to have diminished in order to increase ; he did not, and such a perilous blow resulted that he had better not have begun, since he did not advance in humility. This virtue should be like the tunic without the seam of self-conceit, of which it may be said : ' His mother made him a little coat, which she brought to him on the appointed days, when she went up with her husband.'[2] Your mother is your will which will beget you to God by her husband, divine favour. She

[1] Job v, 88. [2] 1 Kings ii, 19.

made you this tunic and will never cease making it as it ought to grow with you as they say Christ's tunic did with him, for if he never grew in interior he did in exterior humility. Your tunic is small, for you have little humility; but your will shall rise to better things if God is pleased that on the days when you go up to the house of God you are clothed and beautified by this tunic. For there the most lowly is the highest, being most like the Son of the most High, who made himself the least in his Father's house in order to curb the ambition of the proud and glorify the humble.

CHAPTER II

A NOTABLE CHARACTERISTIC OF HUMILITY

A HUMBLE man, if what he ought to be, grows in perfection when he grows in humility, which is a sign that the virtue is genuine. True humility holds itself responsible for all the gifts and graces God gives it, and does not so much consider the gift as the account to be rendered and the obligation incurred. Hence the humble feels no pride but abases himself, and sighs beneath the burden of the favours he has received, remembering that from him to whom much has been given, much will be required.[1] He does not raise himself to what is above him, but descends and bows down to the earth from which humility takes its name, like the tree that bends the lower the more fruit it bears.

Notice that withered, worm-eaten fruit does not bend down the branch so low as that which is healthy and solid, which weighs more and does not rattle when shaken. This is a certain sign by which to distinguish the gifts of God from fictitious ones from the devil. Those from our Lord, wonderful, full of truth, very weighty and perfect, abase and humble a man the more, but the demon's false favours make him vain, and instead of humbling him, raise him up so as to overthrow him the more completely into the depths of hell.

[1] On this subject S. Teresa writes: 'If the soul receives favours and caresses from our Lord, let it examine carefully whether it rates itself more highly in consequence; unless self-abasement increases with God's expressions of love, they do not come from the Holy Ghost. Inevitably, when they are divine, the greater the favours, the less the soul esteems itself, and the more keenly it remembers its sins' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. iii, 25). 'If spiritual delights come from God, they bring humility with them' (*Camino*, xvii, 3)

Ignorant persons often say that God deprives them and other people of his gifts in order to humiliate them. It would be more true to say that he takes away his graces in order to confound and abase them because they were proud and negligent, for God makes souls humble not by taking away his gifts, but by imparting them. God knows without doubt that his favours are so high and excellent that in themselves they humble the soul that is not impaired by any vice, like good wine that improves the vessel into which it is poured. But if the latter is much injured, the wine itself is spoilt. Granted that God sometimes withdraws his gifts from us to abash and mortify us and at the same time allows other humiliating things to happen, if we are silent and remain perfectly humble, our confusion and shame will be converted into humility, so that from being humbled we shall become humble, and from being made abject shall despise abjections, caring nothing for them. Let us not allow them to break our hearts nor overthrow them though they may be cast down, for there is a vast difference between falling down and being seated on the ground, making a safe resting-place by the precipice down which persecution sought to hurl us. Thus we find safety in danger, for to fall is dangerous and to sit is safe. Perfect humility converts the danger into quietude and makes honey by stones like the bee, that is said, when the strong winds blow against it, to take a little stone between its feet and fly low, letting it fall when the wind subsides.[1] Humility, like the stone, helps the soul when blown about, and like a weight, abases it to its own lowliness and self-knowledge.

It follows that the humble never feel shame, but from that which would ordinarily cause it not only do they derive humility afresh, but perfect that they already possess—two things that are rarely found, for few men are humble. S. Bernard says to the imperfect: 'Humiliation is the road to humility, as patience is to peace, and reading to knowledge. If you wish for humility, do not refuse humiliation, for unless you suffer shame, you cannot be made humble.' S. Gregory writes to those perfect in humility: 'It is no great thing to behave humbly to those who treat us with respect, for seculars do the same, but we should behave meekly to those who insult us, like David, who said: "See my humiliation

[1] Like Osuna, S. Teresa compares humility to a bee. 'Let humility be always at work, like the bee at the honey-comb, or all will be lost. But, remember, the bee leaves its hive to fly in search of flowers, and the soul should sometimes cease thinking of itself to rise in meditation on the grandeur and Majesty of its God' (*Castle*, M. i, ch. ii, 9).

which I suffer from my enemies. . . . With them that hated peace I was peaceable." '[1]

From the comparison of the tree we may conclude that when we see anyone who receives favours remain humble, these graces are divine, according to S. Gregory's words : ' A soul full of the divine spirit gives these evident signs : the virtues and humility. When these are perfectly united in a soul, they bear clear witness to the presence of the Holy Ghost.'

It was by this sign, though there were many others as well, that S. Elizabeth knew the virtue of our Lady who came to see her and cried with a loud voice : ' Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb,'[2] as though to say : ' Since thou art so blessed that without my deserving it thou dost hasten to visit me, doubtless the fruit of thy womb must be such as to bring about such things in thee and render thee so humble to me.'

This proves that presumption alone, if shown by those who receive favours, is evidence that they are not from God, for if the inside of a fruit rattles or it weighs very light, it is worthless.

Go down then, brother, to the potter's house—humility—as vile clay from which he is to make of thee what vessel he chooses, either for honour or dishonour. There he will speak better things to thee than in the temple of Jerusalem. Know that this virtue gives security to the heart. It resolves the difficulties that occur during recollection, when the soul sometimes has such sublime feelings about God that it very reasonably doubts whether they are good or not, for their grandeur seems incompatible with its own insignificance. Such a one inquires of the experienced whether what it feels comes from God, or whether an angel of Satan has transfigured himself to deceive his soul and make it fall through pride as the devils fell.

Any doubts arising from these feelings about God and the fears caused by them will be dispelled by this Letter of the Alphabet, on consideration. If humility grows in you with grace, believe that you are making good progress and are not deceived.

The second Letter of the second treatise of this book reassures the soul about feelings experienced during prayer. Those that are perfectly humble escape like little fishes from the net with which the devil, like another Nabuchodonosor, takes captive from Jerusalem the Pacific (the peace of contemplation) the large fish, the proud souls. But if you are humble, you will find safety. Gerson says of this : ' All interior warnings, all vehement im-

[1] Ps. ix, 14 ; cix, 7. [2] S. Luke i, 42.

pulses, all revelations, miracles, ecstatic love, contemplation, transports, in short all our interior or exterior experiences, if preceded and followed by humility unalloyed by anything that destroys it, show a certain sign that they come from God, with no fear of deception. '

CHAPTER III

HOW, WHILE INCREASING, WE MUST DECREASE

THE title of the present Letter, telling us that we must belittle ourselves and decrease by humility, although increasing by spiritual progress, seems hard to understand. To make it easy you must know that, as Gerson says, a creature's nothingness is in proportion to its being. The more excellent its being, the greater its nothingness. The greater its virtue, the more cause for fear, since we fall farthest from the greatest height. The more we mount, if we look down the worse will be our giddiness. Hence we must humble ourselves the more as our gifts increase, for there will be more urgent need that God should hold us by the hand. We must feel stronger fear of the blow that comes from above, for the arrow pierces the more deeply when aimed from the heights. It was because Lucifer was on the summit that he was seen to fall from heaven like lightning; his sin dealt him the deeper wound and he fell farther into the abyss of anguish because of his high estate. Take warning by this to humble yourself as you advance.

It seems contrary to reason that a devout man ought to humble himself more than a stone, which always goes to the lowest depth. Yet, if you consider it, nothing is more reasonable, for he who needs it most must humble himself the more. As a soul requires God more than a stone does, evidently it should abase itself the lower, in proportion as its virtue increases, for the necessity augments that it may maintain its place and rise to better things, which it cannot do without divine help.

To realize that you stand in greater need of God than does a grain of wheat, you must reflect that whatever depends upon another for its being, depends upon him for its actions, for he who gives being gives action. The case is not the same with God as with man in this respect. When a manual worker makes a thing, it is completed in the perfection required; it loses nothing if he dies, as in the case of a tower he has built.

God our Lord does not work in this way; when he gives being

to a thing, though it is perfect, he must not withdraw his aid from it nor forsake it, as David says : ' Thou hast formed me and hast laid thy hand upon me. Thy knowledge has become wonderful to me.'[1] It did not suffice that God formed him, but that he should also lay upon him his helping hand which God never withdraws from anything so long as it exists. If he withdrew it, the thing would perish, and it cannot act unless he acts in conjunction with it.

David, who could not understand God's secret way of working with his creatures, said the divine knowledge was wonderful, for it is not easy to solve the questions raised by this truth. Yet it is certain that God works with all things, and does not hamper, but helps them to act. It does not follow that God works less in this way ; he does more than if he acted alone, for he does not allow his creature to work with him out of necessity but to honour it, for it could not act without him, nor even with him except by his permission.

Therefore God does more by co-operating with the creature than he would by working alone, as he does two things : he acts himself and enables his creature to act with him. And with all this, the Lord is so courteous and considerate that, though he has so large a share in every work, he attributes it all to the secondary cause. He says that the earth or waters produce, though he has been the chief producer. The most divine God seems to be giving us here a lesson in humility if we will attend to it.

If natural objects have great reason to bid us give glory not to them but to God, how much more are men bound to say so of the more difficult works of grace ! If God made you man and you made yourself a saint, you would have done more than he, for it is greater to be holy than to be merely a man, as the one thing is added to the other. We learn that natural bodies bear within themselves the principle of their operation, and our Lord has only to arouse in them the seminal force they contain to make them work. For instance, a grain of wheat has within it power to produce and spring up under favourable natural conditions. It is not so with man in respect to works of merit for which he has no first principle within him. For though we have within us our operative principle, which is our will, we have no gratuitous principle, which is the chief point in meritorious works that will possess merit on account of divine approbation, or the grace that ennobles them. All comes to us from outside ; we must seek and beg for it all from God, for it is his doing alone

[1] Ps. cxxxviii, 5, 6.

that makes our trifling, faulty services acceptable and pleasing to him.

Natural works proceed both from the first and second causes, but from the first cause alone, which is God, come the Redemption and all connected with it. God wills to have companions in creating and sustaining the world, and allows one creature to help him to produce another; but he would let no one aid him to redeem the world, because it was a more important work, fit solely for him. So, for the justification of the sinner, nothing is needed but that he should be annihilated by humility and should offer no obstacle by sin: then will he be recreated, and man, the lesser world, will be brought to the existence of grace, as the greater world which we behold was first created from nothingness. This annihilation must include even the virtuous moral actions that man may have performed, which he must recognize as useless. Bede says of this: 'The perfection of faith in men is that, having done all the work that is required of them, they should know that they are imperfect.' The gloss comments on this: 'The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared. . . .'[1]

That which many merits cannot do, is done by the Holy Ghost. If our own merits (even when free from sin), considered in so far as they proceed from our free will, cannot save us nor are principles of merit, clearly a grain of wheat has more power to reach its final end than man has; for favourable natural causes suffice to make the grain bear fruit, but not to enable a man to bear fruit worthy of the final end for which he hopes.

Lest you should say that we work in vain, since our good works alone do not suffice to justify us, know that these acts do not justify a man, but prepare him for the justification he must receive from God in order to be saved. For as from the sun come light and heat, so justification and glory come from God; but to receive the light of the sun, we must open our eyes: yet we do not receive it on that account, but because the sun infuses it. Yet by opening our eyes we prepare them to receive the light, as by good works we prepare ourselves for justification.

If a man standing in the sunlight refused to open his eyes, it would be his own fault if he did not see, as it will be yours if you do not prepare yourself humbly by good works to be justified by Christ the Sun of Justice, who is more prompt to justify the humble than the sun is to give light. This is why Jesus is called the Sun, not of heat or light, but of Justice. And as he longs to

[1] Rom. viii, 18.

infuse his justice within us, the prophet calls him our Just One.

Then let humility grow in you, preparing you for justification ; let your soul be like a steel mirror which receives the sunlight the better the more it is burnished. Know that if you are negligent, the splendour and beauty that God produces in the humble will not appear in you. The soul is like wax that, placed in the sunlight, melts for love of the ray that his Majesty infuses in it. Humility gives the soul strength to persevere, making known to it that as wax hardens when removed from the sunlight, so the soul, turning from God, will become hard again and lose the recollection and tender love it received from the Lord.

Those who make progress and grow in virtue prepare for God, but only if they are humble and know that the virtues, though good, do not by themselves suffice to save us. That men should be circumcised was a mystery meant to teach us that even our manly, virtuous actions are defective, and need to be circumcised by recollection and purified at the entrance of the heavenly Jerusalem.

Not only are our good actions insufficient in themselves to bring us to God, but, if lacking in humility, they displease him and harm us, as S. Gregory says : ' A great action accompanied with presumption does not raise, but abases us, for he who amasses virtues without humility scatters dust in the wind, blinding himself the more by what he thinks he gains.'

CHAPTER IV

THE NEED OF INCREASE IN HUMILITY

It is very necessary to grow in humility as you grow in virtue, or you will not make good progress, as our Letter declares, because the other virtues wage war against it if it is weak. Gerson says that humility has to fight more strenuously than any virtue, for none of the rest oppose each other, yet they all attack humility if they see it inclined to nod. If you wish to advance, you must try to increase in that virtue as much as in the others. And remember this : humility is its own worst enemy ; for if a man is humble and knows it, he has no humility, since man's worst form of pride is to think he is humble, for he takes the first place while believing he takes the last. This is a most dangerous snare, for as S. Bernard says, the humble wish to be thought vile and not

praised as being humble. Humility is said to possess the characteristic of being unconscious of itself, so it may be called a hidden virtue which God praises secretly in his bride in the Canticles.[1]

God praises it because it is not hidden from him, but clearly manifest, for he looks first at that virtue before attending to the rest, and it was this he regarded in Our Lady, who thought she kept it secret.

There is nothing upon which God so intently fixes his gaze as humility, so that he may be said to have looked on what is humble in heaven, on earth, and in the dunghill. In heaven when he drove the powerful, wicked angels from their throne to exalt the humble, he made no delay, but while they sought to raise themselves, presuming on their own strength, he cast them down. God also looks at men's humility, for his strongest motive for redeeming them was their humbling themselves after sinning, which was not done by the devils. He searches for it even amidst depravity, because he is highly pleased with it wherever and however he discovers it. Adam, on account of the humility shown in hiding himself, was punished less severely than the woman. King Achab was preserved from many dangers because he humbled himself, though with little sincerity. Pharaoh and Abimelech were saved from many ills for the same reason.

The Son of God prized this virtue so highly that he sought it in the stable where he was born and on Calvary where he died in dire abasement on the cross, because, according to S. Augustine, of the reward it brought him. He wished to rise to greater honour and dignity, but found no way, for he held the highest, most glorious place of all. To mount in spite of this, he sought humility, embraced it, cast himself down, abased himself. For this he was exalted to the right hand of the most High, and given a name above all other names, to which his sufferings installed him and the depth of this virtue exalted him.

Christ even followed what is advised in this Letter, to incite us to imitate him, though his humility was of another nature than ours, as he could not ignore it. It is well for us not to know we are humble, which is called a learned ignorance, for though sinners are to blame if unaware of their faults, the just are praised for being unconscious of their virtues, or at least of the grade reached in them. S. Bernard says : ' To preserve humility, God has ordained that the better a man becomes, the worse he thinks he is.'

This seems hard to understand, but if you progress in prayer, it will be made clear to you. You will be like a traveller who with

[1] ' Beside that which lieth hid within ' (Cant. iv, 3).

a hill before him, thinks that when he has climbed it, he will have reached the end of his journey, but finds behind it a large plain over which his former companions are passing. He sees that he has only gone the first part of the way and still has far to travel, and that many others have walked faster.

Oh, how many who think themselves perfect and farther advanced than others will find, if they persevere, that there are countless hills beyond the one they have climbed, which is only the first day's journey, and that if they rate themselves above other people, it is because they do not appreciate their virtues. When they have advanced so far, they will be constrained to reproach themselves in the words of the man after God's own heart: 'I will both play and make myself meaner than I have done: and I will be little in my own eyes.'[1] These grand words were said when David was dancing with great fervour of spirit, regardless of his temporal honour in honour of the eternal King.

David said he would play, for humility wins the game called 'The winner loses.' Without gaining any trick, it takes them all. On taking the lead, it plays a losing card, putting a knave against a knight. The humble man always considers himself inferior to all good men. As S. Gregory says: 'We think little of our great deeds when we compare them with the actions of better men, but ours increase in merit in God's sight when humility makes them decrease in our eyes.'[2]

In the game 'The winner loses,' a man who has poor cards and plays badly wins easily, but with a good hand he wins with difficulty. Some people say that a soul with less virtues can more easily be humble, but that with virtues like the saints', he will find it difficult to humble himself.

Such ideas are far from applicable to humility; they have nothing in common with this game, but are a herding-place for proud thoughts. A humble man always thinks himself as naked as when he was born of all virtue, merit, or any good qualities, and

[1] 2 Kings vi, 22.

[2] 'How well it would be for us to play this game of chess, and if we practised it, how quickly we should checkmate this divine King, so that he neither could nor would move out of our check! No queen can defeat him so soon as can humility. It drew him from heaven into the Virgin's womb, and with it we can draw him with a single hair into our souls' (*Camino*, ch. xvi, 1). 'Practise what I advised in the preceding mansions, then—humility, humility! For God lets himself be vanquished by this and grants all we ask' (*Castle*, M. iv, ch. ii, 8). This is the substitute for Osuna's game of *la gana pierde* which perhaps had become a little old-fashioned by this time.

knows not whether he is worthy of love or hatred. If he sees any virtue in himself (for humility brings all the virtues with it) he looks upon it as a borrowed garment and humbles himself all the more when he thinks of the usury that will be asked of him by the stern Master who reaps even where he did not sow. Fearful at the way in which he has wasted the talent, he cries to God : ' Lord, what loss there has been of the graces you gave me so utterly in vain ! You might have sold them to others who would have paid you a better price, or bestowed them on the poor who are now in want of them.'

A humble man is like a nobleman who purposely loses the game to one he loves, forfeiting his own money to gain his opponent's heart. So he who plays the game with God loses his soul for love of him, stripping it of all and returning it to God, the Fountain Head, like Our Lady, who when she was praised, magnified the Lord who grants graces to men.

David adds that he will ' make himself meaner,' implying that humility must increase, as it will if we grow in the knowledge and love of God. For none can undeceive us as he does, telling us the truth when he comes to us like a friend, and making us realize our nothingness, so that we are like a dwarf who learns best what a pigmy he is by standing beside a giant. Hence we find in Holy Scripture that souls most closely united to God were the most humble.

David also says that he will be little in his own eyes, caring nothing for others, who only see the exterior, which implies that he no longer wished to be thought humble. This is not so in your case, for you speak of some virtue you possess and beg people not to mention it, not because you want it kept secret, but you want them to believe in your humility. If you wish to seem lowly in the eyes of others, you will not be so in your own. Hence you often say things about yourself that you do not believe. This was the case with an anchoress who, Gerson tells, used to accuse herself bitterly to those who spoke to her at her grille. One day a visitor asked her little servant maid what her mistress was like. The girl answered in the words she had often heard the anchoress use of herself : ' My mistress is a wicked woman ; a mass of sleepiness, with no devotion, and is not worth the food she eats.' The old recluse turned on the maid angrily, crying : ' What are you saying ? I assure you, señora, that she is telling falsehoods, for I rise very early and do all I can.'

Many a person humbles himself falsely and would not have others repeat what he says of himself, showing he is wanting both in humility and truthfulness, since he does not wish anyone else

to confirm his words, or if someone does, he either contradicts him or declares he was only joking.

A sincerely humble man allows others to tell him his faults to his face and likes to hear of them and even to have them pointed out publicly, so that he can amend them ; he asks people to show him what to correct since they are willing to do so. Let him who truly wishes to be humble consider his faults above all things and ask others to search for and tell him of them. Let him pray that God will open his eyes to see his defects and nothing else, so that he may say with David : ' For my heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed : and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not. I am become as a beast before thee : and I am always with thee.'[1]

David passes from one extreme to the other in these words, for, according to S. Dionysius, the inflammation of love with which he says his heart is full is attributed to the seraphim, and at the same time he calls himself a beast, as though to hurl himself from the highest summit to the lowest depths. This is the conduct of supreme humility, because it cannot stay to view its treasure of virtues, but never looks away from its faults. It behaves towards God like the beggar at the church door, who covers his sound limbs and bares the diseased, giving a lamentable account of his woes to make people pity him.

The humble man sits trustfully at the door of mercy, not daring to enter with the presumptuous, thinking he is unworthy of being heard. But he shows by prayer to God and his saints all his defects, which are the ills of his soul, and hides what is good as though he had nothing of the kind. He begs perseveringly, for the wise man says : ' Humble thyself to God, and wait for his hands.'[2] Humility, knowing that the helping hands of God are ever extended to the humble, never ceases humbling itself in his eyes alone, caring nothing for men, to whom it subjects itself solely for his sake as it sees God in them.

Not so the proud : like shopkeepers who show the fresh vegetables at the top and put the stale below, they hide their faults and make public any good points they may seem to possess. Hence it is said of them : ' They have set their mouth against heaven : and the tongue hath passed through the earth.'[3] He sets his ' against heaven ' who boasts of his spiritual qualities, and ' his tongue passeth through the earth ' when he hides or makes little of his worldly frailties, or covers them with deceptive speech, as the worm hides itself in the hole it has made in the wood. Such men receive no alms from God, who looks at the poor in spirit

[1] Ps. lxii, 21–23. [2] Ecclus. xiii, 9. [3] Ps. lxxii, 9.

and turns his eyes from the proud, as in the case of the publican and the pharisee. One of them made known his good deeds and was given nothing in consequence; the other was frank, but showed only his defects, and went back to his house justified, while the former remained on the heights to which he had raised himself.

CHAPTER V

WHEN WE OUGHT TO BE HUMBLE

BLESSED is he who strives to humble himself in every possible way, belittling himself in his own sight and in the sight of all men. For if we knew the value of humility in itself alone, we should never cease to seek it and should sell all other aims to purchase this tiny precious stone that ennobles all who find it. But it is not easily found unless the heart is set on it and so watchful as to show simple humility in all its actions. I say 'simple,' for the simplicity of this virtue matters greatly, and you should strive to obtain it in a manner that others do not notice. As it is a hidden virtue, it must be sought for in hidden ways; as, for instance, by pretending not to notice honours or favours received, or not wishing that others should think much of you. Otherwise humility would be offended, for it is very silent and makes no sound. If you are badly treated, do not complain except of yourself for feeling the injury, and be silent about your feelings; if anyone speaks to you about it, deny it and tell him not to think of it. Always, whether in fun or in earnest, make known what would cause you to be despised, and ascribe your talents and graces to others. Speak well of what belongs to other people and contemn your own. Treat those you deal with as superior to yourself, comparing their virtues with your own defects. Serve and honour all men, making known their good points and giving the advantage to them, without wishing to hear yourself praised. Do all this with a pure intention for God alone, before whom the lowly soul ever kneels, submissive and anxious to humble itself in his sight.

O humility, sovereign virtue, mother and mine of virtues, who can find the wits to praise thee and the courage to love thee sincerely? Thou art beloved by God and men; dost make subject the devils by thy quiet subjection; even pride, thy contrary, loves to clothe itself like thee for its own advantage. Thou dost enlarge the heart and deepen it to give greater freedom to the fountain of grace and make more room for God. Thou alone art safe from falling, since thou dost choose the lowest place, and if overthrown

art never wounded. Thou didst exalt Christ, the greatest of men, and the chief of the angels fell because he loved thee not. Thou dost endow those who fight with courage, and art like the earth which, they say, gave strength to its son[1] whenever he descended to it. Thou art not offended by repeated rejections, therefore dost never fail to receive that for which thou askest of him who bade us persevere in prayer. Thou alone art never wearied, because, dissatisfied with what thou hast done, thou dost think it useless. Thou dost turn the house of God upside down, making the last first and the first last. Thou alone dost know the creature's need of God and how the services we render him are rather new graces he secretly bestows. Thou dost prize thyself on being in the debt of God who never refuses himself. When thou receivest much, thou dost look rather at the greatness of the Giver and the obligation laid on thee ; if nothing is given thee, thou dost consider thy lowliness and judge thyself unworthy, saying that for thee the stream of mercies is cut short, and dost strive to restore it by acknowledging thy miseries. Thou didst gain the blessing Jacob obtained instead of his elder brother, because he humbled himself seven times ; didst win the kingdom for Saul and give the victory to David, his enemy. It was thy doing that fire from heaven did not descend upon the third captain who went to summon Elias as it had on the others, because he alone spoke humbly to the prophet. Thou didst cause the wrath of the most High to cease in the days of King Ezechias because he humbled himself before the prophet ; didst strengthen the arm of a woman to cut off the head of the mighty Holofernes, and gave an unhoped-for victory to those who had humbled their souls before God. Thou didst make Esther pleasing to King Ahasuerus because her humility made her hate her queenly ornaments.

Why should I say more ? Thou dost spiritually perform the same works in these days, obtaining the kingdom of heaven for the humble, giving them the victory over their foes, saving many souls from the fire of hell, and appeasing the wrath of God who had allowed certain persons to be tempted as a punishment, by persuading them to submit humbly to good advice. By loving thee, a soul is made so strong that it beheads worldly pride which tried to deprive it of all good. Thou dost render the humble pleasing in the sight of God who causes them to grow and attain a high state of spiritual progress, so that by increasing here in humility, they may increase in glory in heaven.

[1] Bellerophon, when riding the winged horse Pegasus, could only keep his strength by descending to earth occasionally.

TWENTIETH TREATISE

ENCOURAGES US TO BEAR TEMPTATIONS, SAYING: 'TEMPTATIONS ARE MESSENGERS THAT PREPARE US FOR GRACE.'[1]

CHAPTER I

GOD SENDS TEMPTATIONS FOR OUR GOOD

TO encourage the builders of the city of God, S. Augustine tells them of the fruit born of their temptations. He thus exhorts us to suffer the temptations that present themselves when we try to withdraw into the solitude of our soul, which is a little city of God our Lord. Like the children of Israel, we are in no lack of temptations in this spiritual desert: in fact our days are a series of trials until we reach the promised land, which is the enjoyment of contemplation. Even there some trials remain to exercise us, lest we should forget how to fight. However all this may be borne calmly if we look at the glorious results of the struggle, saying with Sara, the daughter-in-law of Tobias: 'This every one is sure of that worshippeth thee, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned: and if it be under tribulation, it shall be delivered: and if it be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to thy mercy. For thou art not delighted in our being lost: because after a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness.'[2]

[1] X, the twentieth letter of this Alphabet, begins in the Castilian with '*Xaropes son tentaciones.*' . . .

[2] Tob. iii, 21, 22.

In her commentary on the two final clauses of the *Pater noster* S. Teresa writes: 'Souls that have arrived at this degree of perfection in prayer do not ask God to deliver them from trials or temptations, or from persecutions and combats. . . . These souls wish for and demand such troubles and love them instead of hating them. They are like soldiers—the more they fight the better they like it, for thus they hope for a richer booty. When there is no war, they live on their pay, but they know they will not grow rich on that. Believe me, sisters, the battle never comes soon enough for the soldiers of Christ. I allude to contemplatives and people who practise prayer. They have little fear of open enemies, knowing them well already and being aware that such

Let none of those who adore God imagine they will live without temptations, since Christ chose to gain the crown in no other way than by enduring them. As the wise man says: 'If the just man receive in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner.'[1] Isaias calls Christ our Just One, who obtains for us all justice from God, so that what was before granted us in mercy is now given in justice; for (presupposing the merits of Christ) S. Paul says that the just Judge will render to him a crown of justice on that day.[2]

Christ, the just Man, by his own will underwent many temptations and much weariness on earth, which is their proper place for there will be none in heaven. Here the living stones of the temple are so carved that there will then be heard neither hammer nor saw nor any other instruments of suffering to disturb us. But note that the stone is cut more elaborately and with more blows, the higher and more conspicuous is the place in which it is to be set; the stone of the portal will be punctured more often to add to its beauty. As Christ made himself the new door of heaven which before had been closed, he willed to be repeatedly struck and hammered while living on earth in his sacred Humanity, which received the blows. And if he chose to undergo such an onslaught of temptations, he did it to make us sinners ashamed to enter by a door so carved without first enduring some few blows to beautify us. For no stone will be placed in the body of the heavenly building that is formed of holy souls unless it has some likeness to the portal, which is Christ. He is the entrance to the triumphal Church and the corner-stone of the Church militant that sustains the weight of the building, for he endured the burden and heat of the day and the cross.

The bitter draughts Christ took were not messengers for him of new grace, as before he suffered any earthly pain he was full of grace. But all that we endure brings us fresh grace; therefore the wise man says: 'My son, reject not the correction of the Lord: and do not faint when thou art chastised by him: for whom the Lord loveth he chastiseth: and as a father in the son he pleaseth himself.'[3]

The chief instruction given us in Holy Scripture by the Lord, a doctrine worthy of him, concerns prayer, which he expounds in

foes have little power against the strength given them by God, through which they always gain the victory and come forth from the fray with great spoil and riches, so that they never beat a retreat' (*Camino*, ch. xxxviii).

[1] Prov. xi, 31. [2] 2 Tim. iv, 8. [3] Prov. iii, 11, 12.

every possible way. It is this that the wise man warns us we must not reject for fear of temptations, or faint when we are chastised by them : that is, cease to pray because we have no confidence in God's help. But he does not allow us to be tempted except in order that we should pray more fervently and turn to him, like the child whose mother frightens it by scolding it to correct it, and who returns to her as she opens her arms to receive it.

Those learned in such matters affirm that temptations are messengers of God's coming, intended by him not to harm us, but to do us much good. So, after having severely threatened the Jews, he said : ' Therefore I will do these things to thee, O Israel : and after I have done these things to thee, be prepared to meet thy God, O Israel.'[1] After having afflicted us, he calls us to him, either because we have in a manner purchased him by bearing our trials well, or because it is safer then to show us greater tenderness and give himself to us, as, after the great grief suffered by the Blessed Virgin and S. Joseph when they lost the Child Jesus, it is told that he was subject to them.

Whenever you have anything to suffer, think that the messenger of God's advent visits your house. When God was coming to see and speak with Elias on the mountain, he sent as his nuncios fire and tempest, after which he came without risk. If we apply the wise man's comparison of the father and son to God and Christ, we shall see that the eternal Father was better pleased with his Son when the latter was afflicted and tempted, for then, as the Apostle says, ' he was heard for his reverence,' and obtained all he sought. God is pleased with you, as he was with his Son, when he sees you grieved and tempted. Believe that by this means you were adopted, for there is no reason that the only begotten Son should be more harshly treated than the adopted children.[2]

The all-wise Father, knowing the benefit accruing to his sons through temptations, and being resolved to help them, gives them severe conflicts, casts them down to the depths, gives them bread

[1] Amos iv, 12.

[2] Of longing for suffering, S. Teresa says : ' I believe I have never known real pain since I resolved to serve my Lord and my Consoler with all my strength ; for though he would leave me to suffer a little, yet he would console me in such a way that I am doing nothing when I long for troubles. And it seems to me that there is nothing worth living for but this, and suffering is what I most heartily ask of God. I say to him sometimes with my whole heart : " O Lord, either to die or suffer. I beg of thee nothing else for myself " ' (*Life*, ch. xl, 27).

and straw to teach them self-denial. He visits, raises, and proves them and gives them courage to preserve them against the risings of pride and deceptions and their irritation at their falls. Then do not fear temptation, brother, when you have such a counterweight as God's love for you. He is better served by you when you are tempted, for you suffer for him, but when you are consoled, your work is done for you.

Be sure to turn within yourself and seek God whenever anything happens that annoys you, like the dove that, when pursued by a bird of prey, flies away and enters a safe place of refuge. You too ought to enter the refuge of your heart, where you will find God, and every adverse circumstance will be to you a messenger of grace, as this Letter declares. Then the words of Isaias will be fulfilled in you : ' And a man shall be as when one is hid from the wind, and hideth himself from a storm, as rivers of water in drought, and the shadow of a rock that standeth out in a desert land.' The gloss comments : ' He shall be safe in tribulations, as one who flying from the wind and tempest hides in a safe place, and like one who finds the purest streams of water in the desert and shade from the heat of the sun.'

Let us hide, then, from the wind of the imagination and enter into ourselves, for there, S. Augustine says, we shall find most quickly the safest shelter, as from our interior being rise springs of living water set in us to quench the thirst felt by our soul for God.

Isaias says that he who retires within himself is in the shade, for the power of the most High overshadows him in the interior desert, whence the soul rises like a pillar of smoke of aromatical spices, without inclining to anything created.

I will say nothing here of the good effects of temptation because everyone knows them. The sage says : ' He that hath not been tried, what manner of things doth he know ? '[1] For he does not know how to learn by them as Christ learnt, nor how to humble himself before God and man, because he does not feel so strongly his need of help from them. Nor does he know how to overcome negligence through being compelled by necessity, which arouses a man even when he requires sleep. He has not learnt to fear and watch on all sides,[2] like a man who has enemies, nor is he known for his virtue, since the touchstone reveals the quality of the gold, and he does not give forth the good odour of Christ,

[1] Ecclus. xxxiv, 11.

[2] *Trayendo la barba sobre el hombro,* wearing his beard over his shoulders—looking behind him.

like incense in the brazier of tribulation. He who is not tempted fails to win so high a rank as he would have reached, and does not know how to compassionate the afflicted or refrain from venial sins. He does not think of God or pray so often, or purge his soul thoroughly, nor does trial bring him wisdom. He does not learn to wage war in this world or earn merits during this life, the fitting time for it, because God does not hold out to him the precious golden sceptre of temptation, which, as a pledge of his mercy, he sends from Sion to give us increase in grace and glory, and heal the vices that would abound in us without it. God wounds in order to heal, and the rod blooms and bears almonds : the flowers for an electuary, the nuts for a strengthening emulsion to give us health and nourishment.[1]

CHAPTER II

OUR LORD ALWAYS SUITS TEMPTATIONS TO THE TEMPTED

As he who is not tempted misses the many advantages we mentioned, you should say with David : ' If a battle should rise up against me, in this will I be confident. One thing I have asked of the Lord ; this will I seek after ; this will I seek in the battle, unafraid.'[2]

David says that he will be confident respecting his petition, and this confidence, S. Augustine says, regards victory and an eternal reward which must be won by fighting like a brave Christian knight, for the greater our struggle in resisting temptation, the more glorious will be our recompense. This is symbolized by the Children of Israel, who, the more they were oppressed by the Egyptians, ' the more they were multiplied and increased.' The faithful sons of their Captain Christ being tempted, increase in grace and glory and their good behaviour is confirmed, for as Seneca says, virtue grows greatly when exercised.

It follows that temptations are messengers of grace, as this Letter says, and the greater they are, the more valuable will the graces be. As in hell the most powerful men will be the most tormented, so in this world, which is, as it were, the hell of the righteous, those most distinguished for graces and virtues will undergo the fiercest temptations ; the stronger in proportion to

[1] *Almendrada*, almond milk, an emulsion made of almonds and sugar.
[2] Ps. xxvi, 3, 4.

their sanctity. S. Paul says that God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able to bear, but will temper the stroke to our strength. Therefore it is said that S. John the Baptist was tempted in the same way as Lucifer when they sent to ask him whether he was the Christ. As Tobias was told: 'Because thou wert acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee,'[1] and the more acceptable you are, the stronger will the temptation be. Fear not, but listen to the wise man: 'Humble thy heart and endure: incline thy ear and receive the words of understanding: and make not haste in the time of clouds. Wait on God with patience: join thyself to God, and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end. Take all that shall be brought upon thee: and in thy sorrow endure and in thy humiliation keep patience. For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Believe God, and he will recover thee: and direct thy way and trust in him.'[2]

Keep these words in mind if you are tempted: notice that they bid you join yourself to God and *endure*, for if nothing were required but to join ourselves to God, all would wish to do it. What has to be suffered is the thing that pains us, for if you withdraw from an unrecollected life to join yourself to God, you will be much more tempted than you were, in order to test you. Pharaoh treated the Israelites much worse after God had visited them, and the devil, after he had gone out of a man, took seven worse than himself back with him, like one who goes to subject anew those who have revolted. Laban, seeing that Jacob withdrew from him, took some of his brethren with him and pursued him more fiercely. Even Christ, when he went into the desert to commend to God his work of greater perfection, was more tempted. The five neighbouring kings who reigned in the Promised Land, seeing that the Gabaonites were in league with Josue, at once set off to besiege Gabaon, betokening that even our five senses fight against us more with their suggestions when we determine to love the world no longer but to fix our heart on God. Sometimes when we close the door of our heart we hear the sound of those who pass to and fro more clearly than if we had left it open, and it disturbs us more than when we made no resistance.

Some people who had no such struggles to undergo when they practised less perfection and exercises of little account, say that it would have been better to stay where they were less molested, and that their low state of perfection with joy was better than a

[1] Tob. xii, 13 [2] Ecclus. ii, 2–6.

continual struggle to guard their heart; for through rejecting some indifferent thought they are annoyed by numbers of thoughts that pain and harm them. This is a cowardly excuse: as the Israelites were blamed for refusing to go into the Promised Land to save themselves trouble, clearly this plea ought not to be admitted.

If all the ground upon which you shall set your foot shall be yours, and the greater the demon you overcome, the higher shall be your throne, the hope of a rich crown ought to lessen your trouble, as you know that if you have the courage to resist, God will give you grace to overcome. If men of little virtue lacked temptations, there would be some reason for being contented with less in order to be safer: but even fasting may cause vainglory. This is so great an evil that S. Cyprian says there is no such insidious parasite of religious practices as vain-glory; nothing so wheedles itself into men's good graces as fasting does into the toil of the faster. Importunate praise is offered him and penetrates his soul with most subtle stings, which exalt while they soften, and prick while they anoint. Virtue changes into hypocrisy, absolutely destroying the good that has been begun, as the moth eats holes in what was entire. It destroys the foundations of sanctity, which it casts to the winds; it cuts the throat of the hypocrite with his own dagger and fights against sanctity with its own weapons. Chastisement of the flesh inflates his spirit and the weakness of his body has a share in the arrogance of the lean, presumptuous faster. His self-contempt obtains for him veneration: hunger and thirst bring him his fill of praise: the soul, saturated with this venom, delights in its miseries and glories in its wounds: religion becomes only an outward show, and is succeeded by disguised ambition. The spirit that has been starved in the body during four days dies, leaving only the remnants of the virtues, the appearance of a body without its soul, and a counterfeit of sanctity. Hypocrites are such fools as to use what smells filthy instead of perfumes, to prize what is coarse, and to find harsh things soft because their love of praise overcomes their dislike for them, and distempered sensuality delights in its contraries. Therefore Christ sought for his fast solitude where there was no one to judge his doings, and the wilderness where there were no witnesses.

CHAPTER III

RECOLLECTION CAN WAGE WAR BETTER THAN CAN ANY OTHER EXERCISE

EVERY virtue is greatly tempted and hindered in this world, so do not be surprised if recollection is violently attacked. As Gerson says, you should consider that this exercise is more invincible than any other though more often assaulted, so that if you are alarmed at its constant struggle, you should take courage at its skilful manner of defence. This is so excellent that if you examine it well, it will help you to overcome the many temptations offered by the devil to those who meditate on the sacred Passion.

Almost all temptations begin with the senses, for the devil starts with them as the weakest and easiest to attack. The fall of Eve and David began with the eyes ; Adam's by listening to his wife ; that of Judas with the sense of smell by which he learnt the value of the ointment that was poured out. Impurity and gluttony start with touch and taste. Hence, as the evil one only works on the senses and imagination, where all his snares are laid, evidently he can do little against the recollected, whose chief aim is to rise above the things of sense by which the imagination can work.

Whatever kind of devotional life men lead, besides practising their principal exercises, they must learn how to defend themselves. The recollected shield themselves from the devil by recollection—the constant watch over their heart into which they retreat, leaving the tempter outside as a laughing-stock. They are like the porcupine which, on seeing the dogs coming, coils up into itself so that they can find neither its head nor its tail and are made ridiculous. By the same means, the recollected easily conquer the devil. But sometimes he is so furious at seeing himself outdone at the very door, that when all else fails, he tries to overcome his opponents by heavy blows, terrors, and apparitions.

Earnest men are not so alarmed by visions of the devil as by learning that during mental prayer there occur fleshly temptations figured by the serpents met with by the Israelites in the desert, whose very breath burnt them. These are the evil desires inflamed by the devil, whose breath, as Job says, kindles coals.

It is unjust that any exercise should be disparaged on account of temptations common to all. As Gerson says and experience shows, bad thoughts often occur to souls meditating on the Passion, so afflicting them that they cannot even gaze peacefully on the crucifix. Many a simple man thinks his soul must already be

condemned for such imaginations. But a sensible person despises these flies of Egypt and continues his devotions.

We know that these temptations occur during recollection, but that does not prevent its being good and holy. If temptation were bad for us, God would have taught us to pray against it, but he only tells us to ask that we may not be overcome by it. Beg for this, and if you suffer temptations, know, as S. Bernard says, that it is no inglorious lot to suffer evil well.[1] Sometimes the devil leaves you untempted to make sure of you, for often those who have never been tried are overcome by a slight temptation from which those already proved would have come forth victors. Recognize God's mercy ; he did not allow the temptation because he saw your weakness and knew you would have been overcome. Since God is faithful, believe that the stronger the temptation, the stronger his help, if the trial is incurred through drawing near to God and so provoking the jealousy the enemy feels at others' attaining to the peace that he has lost.

He who nurses a viper in his bosom, even though it sleeps, must not feel safe : a little warmth will revive it, and a viper bit even S. Paul. If, as S. Jerome says, the devil is assaulting us most artfully when we know it least, we should never feel safe or say we are not molested, for he does not go to sleep.

He who boasts of not being tempted as though it were praiseworthy, hardly seems to belong to the Church militant, for even Jebuseus was tempted. Temptation is sent to make the soul humble at seeing that it cannot conquer even in little things. Jebuseus (a kicking horse) signifies the body from which the soul suffers annoyance. ' But though our outward man is corrupted : yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory. While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen.'[2] God, the devil, the flesh, and mankind tempt the devout.

[1] ' The foes the devout really dread—and it is well they should dread them and should always pray God that they may be delivered from them —are those treacherous antagonists the devils, who transform themselves into angels of light. They come in disguise and do not let us find them out until they have wrought great harm to the soul. They suck our very life-blood and destroy our virtues, while we unwittingly are surrounded by temptations. Let us constantly beg of God, daughters, in the *Pater noster* to deliver us, that we may not be deluded by their temptations, but may detect their poison and that light may not be withdrawn from us ' (*Camino*, ch. xxxviii, 1).

[2] 2 Cor. iv, 16–18.

As is said in Deuteronomy: 'God was thy leader in the great and terrible wilderness, wherein there was the serpent burning with his breath, and the scorpion, and the dipsas, and no waters at all.'[1] That God is our Guide and leads us where there are no waters means that he tempts us, though in a different way, as he always does so for a good end. As a Doctor of the Church says, he tries us solely to advance us and raise us to greater things, giving a harder conflict to those he loves so that they may merit a richer crown. Consequently it is lawful to wish to be tempted by God, but not well to desire temptation from other sources.

CHAPTER IV

DEVOTION OFTEN FAILS DURING RECOLLECTION

THE most common temptation that God sends in this terrible wilderness of recollection is dryness, and want of the sweet water of devotion that usually abounds in this desert. It is sweeter here than elsewhere, though it is a longer and more dificult task to find it. According to S. Bernard, in Christ are found both stone and earth. The stone is his divinity, the earth his humanity. The recollected excavate the stone: those who meditate on the Passion dig the earth with greater ease, find what they seek, and are consoled figuratively by the water and blood that came from the Saviour's side, shed for the sake both of them and contemplatives.

All toil in Christ. Some enter in at the divinity, others come out at the humanity; all of them find abundant pasture. Yet for our sins, sometimes our Lord dries up the fountains and the place of his glory in this wilderness, always through our own fault. God has two ways of depriving us of devotion. The first is by depriving us of the sweetness and spiritual happiness felt by the devout by which the soul is greatly refreshed and consoled, especially during recollection. This bread of consolation is the sweeter for being hidden. One way God has of taking away grace is by depriving the soul of this comfort and afflicting it with dryness.

The second way is more to be feared, for it is very hard to bear. This is when charity fails and a man loses all his accustomed solicitude and longing to search for God. He does not want to recollect himself nor does he care to pray. He has lost his former holy earnestness and desire, feels no sensible consolation, and makes no effort to attain to better things.

[1] Deut. viii, 15.

God usually deprives a person of the first grace either on account of some recent venial sin, or a mortal sin committed in the past and forgiven. The soul does not deserve to return at once to the former close, unreserved intimacy it enjoyed when devout, although it is in grace and has infused charity.

We read that God forbade Moses to enter the Promised Land because of his past sin, though he had long been restored to friendship with his Lord. This shows that God often punishes his children's former misdeeds with temporal penalties to prevent their sinning again.

Wonder not at God's depriving men of devotion on account of venial sin, for a careless lapse into wandering thoughts deserves to forfeit consolation, which is not given to the unrecollected. Genuinely devout souls feel that they lose much by every act of dissipation, however trivial, though in such cases God may dissimulate and overlook it, not avenging it at once.

The second withdrawal of grace never happens except through mortal sin committed at the time, and God does not bestow devotion again except after thorough repentance. Be most earnest in seeking him as devout souls do; for if through your own fault God deprives you of this zeal, you will have lost everything. The remedy against this temptation is for a man not to return to seeking bread from stones or fall back on other vain joys, but to nourish himself on the water of tears day and night. For not only ought you to sigh for consolation when you lack it, which is to 'weep in the night,' but you should grieve while you have it, lest it should be taken from you when you err, which would be to 'weep in the day.' Thus you will mix your drink with your tears, like a child which after its distress weeps as it sucks the milk from its mother's breast. It is the happier for it, as she adds caressing words to her milk and presses the babe to her to console it.

CHAPTER V

OF TEMPTATIONS OF THE FLESH

Moses also says that in this wilderness there is a 'serpent burning with his breath,' meaning the devil, who like another Abimelech goes to the gate of the tower (the sense of touch) to light the fire of cupidity and burn those who have mounted to the higher part of their soul. In this way, the servants of this hateful king, the members of our body which he uses against us, cease not to kindle the furnace of temptation with tow and wood and grass, adding

one thing after the other, so that the three children (our senses) may perish. But our Lord sends as our defence the dew of his grace, so that the fire will not harm those who suffer for him. Truly may it be said of them : ' When thou shalt walk in the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, and the flames shall not burn in thee : for I am the Lord thy God, the holy one of Israel, thy Saviour.'[1]

No one should be surprised at feeling sensual movements, for every Christian knows that they only harm those who take pleasure in them ; and as this pleasure makes them wrong, displeasure at them makes them beneficial. Hence these creatures are the meeker as regards God, the fiercer they are to us, for if they dwell in our precincts against our will, God takes no offence at them. Though he sees our inn is not so clean as we should wish, he does not cease to hide himself in the manger of our heart, even though wild beasts surround it. It does not follow that those who suffer these temptations are children in perfection, for when our Lord was thirty years of age we read of his being in the desert with the wild animals, and we may well say to him with Job : ' The beasts of the earth shall be at peace with thee.'[2]

Our sensual movements are at peace with our Lord when he is not offended by them. In fact, such creatures may raise the soul to Jerusalem where it is joyfully received into perfect peace, for as S. Gregory says, the more evil assaults increase, the more they render us humbly subject to God. The same Saint comments on Job : ' It often happens that the Holy Spirit raises the soul to sublime thoughts while importunate temptations assail the body. When the soul is raised to contemplate heavenly mysteries, imaginations connected with the bodily functions present themselves, for the flesh at once attacks the superior part that is snatched away by holy contemplation. Thus heaven and earth are constrained to be united when one and the same soul is illumined by contemplation and darkened by the importunity of temptation, so that it may behold what it craves, and falling from it, may suffer in mind through what is shameful. For if S. Paul saw another law in his members, who shall be entirely freed from it ? '

The Saint here gives us to understand, so Richard says, how the spirit may be elevated in contemplation, yet commit idolatry in the valley below where the common people dwell. If the devil is given power over our flesh as he was over that of Job, we cannot vanquish him in a short encounter, but only with the resistance of our will and opposition of mind, as he was conquered in heaven by another spirit. Gerson gives an example : a man had a bad

[1] Isa. xliii, 2, 3. [2] Job v, 23.

wife whom he could not stop from talking. She slipped into a bog which covered her with mud and nearly swallowed her up. He asked her whether she would be silent now. Turning towards him as best she could, she answered insolently: 'I won't be quiet even now!' So, when you are enveloped in the mud of temptations, do not let them conquer you or give yourself up as defeated, but cry with heart and voice against them: 'I will not be silent now by ceasing to draw near to my God.' So you can retain your innocence as this bad wife kept to her evil-doing.

Gerson also says that this conflict embellishes our crown and will double our reward.

CHAPTER VI

HOW ASTUTELY THE DEVIL TEMPTS US

Do not be afraid of temptations that benefit you so much: remember that your virtue will be perfected by the infirmity of the flesh. The devil is too acute to tempt everyone in the same way: he attacks the wise in a more subtle, hidden manner and takes different measures according to people's dispositions.

He does not treat all in the same way without distinction, nor lead them to commit the same vice by the like means. This was shown to S. Dominic when he saw the demon skipping about the tables in the refectory, saying: 'A large portion here, a small one there: here a large one, there a small one.' When the Saint bade him explain himself, he answered that he made some religious eat much and others little. Seeing that some of the friars were in a devout frame of mind, he inspired them to take no food, making them believe it would be a grave sin to eat while enjoying such grace which would take the place of food. He did this to make them take twice the amount later on to make up for what they had missed. Therefore no one should desist from taking what he needs even when he feels unwilling, for he will merit more by eating then than by fasting at another time.

The devil knows well that he must tempt a man to the sin to which he is most inclined, as the bird-catcher spreads his net in the place that the birds frequent. David complained of this: 'In this way wherein I walked, they have hidden a snare for me.'[1] So one must be wary, go against one's bad inclinations, and tread cautiously on dangerous roads. Learn from the birds who shun the place where they were trapped and remember that when the devil has once overcome you, though you rise again he thinks he

[1] Ps. cxli, 4.

has a certain right over you. He acts like a good hound that gives chase more keenly after it has bitten the prey, thinking there can be no escape for it now. Since you have won alertness from your fall, do not be dismayed, but pluck up courage for it will bring you great glory if you escape from the hands that once entrapped you and can sing: 'The snare is broken and we are delivered.'[1]

The devil keeps to one temptation in many cases, having proved its efficacy, like a good doctor who prescribes what he knows suits the patient. Satan thus feels almost sure of success. He tempted Christ in the same way as he tempted Adam, feeling certain of victory because his arms had been tested.

If you wish to take the wind out of his sails, consult those who have overcome this special temptation, which will turn the tables on the enemy, for the same remedy can conquer the same temptation. When the devil meets with difficulties, he generally desists for a time to make you feel safe, but you must never cease to watch and pray. Never feel secure; then so long as you keep firm you will not be vanquished.

It would be tedious to tell of the devil's many ways of tempting people according to their characters and station in life, times, and places. Notice one thing: deceivers depart if they know they are detected; they will leave anyone who does not keep his temptations secret but makes them known, and will have nothing to do with him. Therefore, to overcome the evil one, reveal his suggestions to competent advisers, according to the wise man's words: 'If thou discover his secrets, follow no more after him.'[2] Fear whatever has the appearance of evil and do not trust in revelations; pay no attention to any counsellors outside your own Order. Your community should suffice you, without your seeking ignorant women who are perhaps themselves deceived. Even if this is not the case, your superior has more authority to decide your doubts than the foolish women you seek out.[3] If your mind will subject itself only to certain people famous for their sanctity, and to no one else, know that you are deceived and that the devil has made you believe you are 'somebody,' though in reality your imagination has misled you into making an idol of yourself.

The third danger in this wilderness is the large number of

[1] Ps. cxxiii, 7. [2] Ecclus. xxvii, 19.

[3] This may be an allusion to the false *beata* and *alumbrada* Francisca Hernandez who led astray Francisco Ortiz, a young Franciscan of great promise, who was imprisoned for years on that account. Boehmer accuses Fray Osuna of having been influenced by her, but P. Michel-Ange defends him from the charge on account of his teaching, which is diametrically opposite to hers (see *Studies of the Spanish Mystics*, p. 92).

scorpions—people who appear friendly and speak ill of you behind your back. They bite secretly, complain of you, condemn you as a hypocrite, think that they should be on their guard against you as double-faced. They suppose that you only recollect yourself in order to turn over their defects in your mind ; they strain at your gnats and swallow their own camels. They will not overlook your smallest possible defect, but keep it in mind until they find an opportunity of telling you that since you presume to practise recollection, it is unbearable that you should do so and so : they reduce all your doings to presumption, saying that your recollection is feigned and a lofty fantasy that makes you despise honours. Because you draw near to God, you will be called drowsy, your peace will be styled sloth, and I know not what intention they will not attribute to you, as though your object were enjoyment rather than prayer. They will note everything you eat and wear as though you belonged to their fathers' household. If they cannot prevail against you in these ways, they find fault with your lineage or your age, and bring to mind the faults of your childhood ; and between gibes and truth they ridicule you with odious remarks. To add to that, when they mean to correct you, they begin by praising you, that they may cast you down the further, and you may be exalted and humbled and confused at the same time. If perchance you should show anger, they accuse you of losing patience, not remembering that they have lost justice. They say that you do not imitate Jesus Christ by suffering, while they imitate the devil whose office it is to tempt and weary men by disturbing their conscience.[1]

The chief effort of unprincipled men is to quote the words of the recollected, misinterpreting them in order to slander and condemn them by means of some person who is either senseless or possessed, and who takes for wrong what he does not understand. Fear not men's persecutions, though they are the worst of all, for in the midst of this whirlwind, like another Elias, you can mount to the

[1] Speaking from her own experience of what contemplatives suffer from others, S. Teresa writes : ' An outcry is raised against such a person by those among whom she lives, and even by others with whom she has had nothing to do but who fancy that at some time in her life they recollect having seen her. They say she wants to pass for a saint, that she goes to extremes in piety to deceive the world and to depreciate people who are better Christians than herself without making such a parade of it. . . . Persons she thought were her friends desert her. They take it much to heart that her soul is ruined—she is manifestly deluded —it is the devil's work—she will share the fate of so-and-so who was lost through him, and she is leading virtue astray ' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. i, 5 ; also *Life*, chs. xxv, xxviii, xxx, xxxiii).

heaven of contemplation. Imitate a swarm of bees that returns to the hive during a tempest. Remember, trees supply their own strength which encloses itself in the root; springs are warmest at their fount in the coldest weather; fish dive into the water and the frogs leave off croaking. Let us follow their example by being the more recollected as persecution waxes fiercer, for this is the best way to overcome it.

Only those who make of temptation a spur to recollection taste its good fruits, and with the ear of their soul hear each temptation and trial bid them retire into their own heart. These, in secret, find God more tender and bountiful to them then than before, and learn by experience the truth of the wise man's words: 'When they heard that by their punishments the others were benefited, they remembered the Lord, wondering at the end of what was come to pass.'[1] 'What was come to pass' means the benefits conferred by trials suffered well. At such times we should think of the Lord, not of our temptors, for if, as S. Gregory says, we should consider while reading Holy Scripture not him who wrote, but what he wrote, neither should we think during temptation of our persecutors, but of God, who allows it, to inure us and teach us understanding from our trials.

Though you may be persecuted on all sides, do not be dismayed, for God will make the truth known, and will deliver you as he did David, who being surrounded on all parts, lost hope of escaping from Saul's hands. But God so befriended him that he got the mastery over his enemy, allowing him to go free instead of repaying evil by evil.

CHAPTER VII

HOW TO TREAT SUCH TEMPTATIONS

If you examine carefully you will find that your adversities consist rather in yourself and your imagination than in any reality of their own.[2] You are like a person walking through a dark place

[1] Sap. xi, 14.

[2] 'Some slight annoyance hardly worth mentioning is offered you, and the devil instigates one of your sisters to consider it a grave insult. . . .'

All who aspire after perfection must fly a thousand leagues from saying: "I was in the *right*: it was not *right* for me to suffer this; they had no *right* to do such a thing to me!" God deliver us from such *rights!* Do you think that there was any question of *rights* when our good Jesus suffered the injuries that were so *unrighteously* inflicted on him? I do not know what any person is doing in a convent who will only bear a cross that people have a *right* to lay upon her—let her go back to the world where people care nothing for such rights' (*Camino*, ch. xiii).

at night, who thinks he sees ghosts that are really only fancies; or if he saw anything, it was merely the darkness and gloom, which are nothingness in themselves. We feel intensely things that are insignificant, and even sometimes non-existent. You imagine that you have enemies, though no one wishes you ill; you take to yourself a remark that was not meant for you; the speaker was not thinking of you, but you conjecture that the arrow was aimed at yourself. You have wounded yourself with children's weapons, with words of little meaning. You are so touchy and sensitive that people dare not speak to you, lest you should feel wounded when not attacked and complain without reason. Do not be so sensitive; be wide-minded; remember how Saul heard what was said against him and pretended not to know, letting it pass, and afterwards, when he could have avenged himself, despised reprisals. There is no better way of defending yourself against unkind words than to treat them as a joke. I know someone personally who laughingly passed off such remarks as said in fun, and silenced his enemies with a witty rejoinder. They soon lost their bad temper and made light of what they had said in earnest. The humble know all these tactics, but the proud take offence at everything and are never at peace.

You may object that though some things may be thus passed off, other charges brought by people well known for their malice cannot be treated as a joke, for if you laugh in their presence, they call you quarrelsome. They concentrate their mind on counting your footsteps and noting how many you take; they eagerly invent things, and finally resemble Decius who brought about the death of S. Laurence for the sake of the treasure he held under pretence of zeal for the pagan gods, Some people persecute others in order to obtain their office and to injure their good name, thinking to increase their own, yet with all this, they feign to be religious.

Even if this happens to you, if you are good no harm can result to you, for no one can take God from you, and to take away anything else is to relieve you of trouble. But you must be cautious and commit no open fault, for these people will load you with bitter reproaches if you reveal any want of virtue. They will so rave and fulminate against you that they will seem rather to be persecuting than correcting you. But like a good knight, fear them not, for the accusers you think are your enemies are your advisers and are very useful in God's house. They are like the smith's file, which wears off the superfluity of other things while spoiling itself.

The Romans could have destroyed Carthage, but the wisest among them decided against it, for war with that city gained victory, power, and fame for the Romans and kept them practised in warfare. Hence it is well for you to have rivals who watch you narrowly, lest you should grow careless in practising the good life that every prudent man should follow.

S. Augustine says that the greatest persecution a man can endure is to be without it, for as it comes from heaven and was the way by which Christ entered there, the door to life seems shut against us when we are not persecuted. Do not forsake virtue, though it brings persecution on you, for if your persecutors do not see your error now, at the day of judgement they will tell you that you were weak and foolish, and that, as you were certain that you were right, you should not have yielded to their ignorance. Sometimes their intention is as upright as your own, and as they cause you little harm and you expect a great reward, you would be the more culpable if for fear of the cold you refused to work. You would be like a nervous horse that starts when a sparrow flies up near it as though it had seen a lion.

If perfect peace reigned among men, there would be no need of patience, which may be called a virtue springing from the lack of peace, as sorrow for sin is a virtue springing from the lack of original justice which has been lost, for had mankind not lost it, penitence would not have been required. The want of the peace that existed before sin is supplemented by the patience that we need, though peace would have been better. However, lest all should be lost, we must seek for the patience that the Gospel calls ours on account of the want of peace it implies, while peace, being one of the principal and greatest of virtues, is attributed to Christ, the Prince of Peace. He never lost it in any of the persecutions he underwent, always keeping his heart in perfect quiet, whatever happened. His reason most promptly watched against any movement of his sensitive nature, which never acted for a moment against his reason, nor did his reason act against his Divinity. But we, wretched creatures, so yield to the influence of our senses that we hardly appeal to our reason, or do not listen to it, for if we did, and if we controlled our sensitive nature until it was subservient to reason, it would be easy to obtain patience and peace.

CHAPTER VIII

OF ANOTHER KIND OF BODILY TEMPTATION

THE fourth temptation is the dipsas or thirsty scorpion, an image of fleshly temptation because, says the gloss, it is an asp so small that we do not see it when we tread on it, and if it stings, we die of thirst. Evil desires of the flesh, which never say 'enough' but ever 'more, more!' may be called a serpent that we all have to do with when we enter the world, for we were conceived in it. We do not see it or know how it bit us when we feel its savage, thirsty sting and pricks of evil longings. That our mortal thirst may be quenched and we may not die of it, God gave the water of Baptism which somewhat relieves and stops our craving for wrongful pleasures, making what was a sin an occasion for gaining merit.

A person may be tempted to impurity by two means, either exterior or interior. It suffices to say that the first comes from Satan, like the provocation to desire of many other vices. But a man is often tempted by none of these, but solely by the craving that results from the serpent's sting, for 'every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured.'[1]

As there are two sources of temptation you should find out whether yours comes from without or solely from a natural movement, like the other appetites of fallen man. As the sage says: 'Be diligent to know the countenance of thy cattle, and consider thy own flocks: for thou shalt not always have power; but a crown shall be given to generation and generation.'[2]

Many are the seeds and harmful little animals contained within our wretched bodies, that is, the inclinations to vice. But we should search for their origin and effects, that we may cut their malice short, though, as the wise man says, we have not always the power, for human effort cannot control these animals: our enemy is within us, and the most watchful shepherd cannot wholly silence them and make them forget their natural perversity. The worst of it is, as S. Bernard teaches we are forced to maintain the foe we fight with, but this is ordained by our Lord, that he may give us a crown of victory, as the sage declares. S. Augustine says of this: 'God knows what strength and good will you have, and watches your struggle with your body: he bids you war,

[1] S. James i, 14. [2] Prov. xxvii, 23, 24.

helps you to conquer, sees the battle, raises up the fallen, and crowns the victor. As trials outside us do not force us to have recourse to him, he allows us to have inward trials that oblige us to go to him who is the defender of the just.' As S. Gregory writes: 'God mixes stripes with his gifts, to make all we loved in this world bitter; so that the passion that troubled us may raise us to long for heaven.'

This shows that bodily temptations should be messengers to lead us to God, who, seeing us troubled, comes and dwells in us as he promised if we were persecuted for love of him. This is figured in the flaming bush the prophet saw that was not burnt and God was in it, for doubtless he controlled the fire. Our body is a very thorny bush full of prickles—the temptations that wound the soul: though the fire of evil longings burn within it, the will is not consumed if it does not consent, nor does God forsake the soul, for he does not hate nature but sin, and he remains in the body that is tempted though he leaves the sinful one.

Then do not be afraid if you are tempted or believe those who tell you it will make God withdraw from you, for you are not the only one that must undergo the conflict between flesh and spirit spoken of by S. Paul. Nor must you ask what was the use of your conceiving your holy exercise and devotion if you were to feel within you the struggle of Esau and Jacob—sensuality and the reason, for God has power to bring the right to birth.

The times will change, as spring follows winter, and the Bridegroom will tell you to arise and hasten. Meanwhile arise, even if you cannot hasten as you would wish because you are weighed down by the corruptible flesh that wars against the soul. The flesh draws us to the earth whence it was taken, and the spirit turns to God who gave it. If you know how to suffer this patiently, you will pass through fire and water until you find refreshment, and according to the sorrows of your heart, will be the comfort that gives joy to your soul.

Remember the wise man's words: 'As silver is tried by fire, and gold in the furnace: so the Lord trieth the hearts.'[1] The furnace is your miserable body, from which the soul is departing day by day. Remember the chaste Joseph. As the gloss says, he was blameless though men strove to defame him. The old men sought to corrupt Susanna, and failing that made her appear guilty. Susanna, 'a lily'—the afflicted soul encircled by thorns—is tempted by its old desires—they see it given to God, its Spouse. Seeing that it does not consent, they try to make it

[1] Prov. x. 17.

appear guilty, raising empty scruples. Thus, in the midst of anguish, it can only cry to God who succours it through Daniel —the judgement of God—that is, the reason why it keeps close to God, condemning its perverse imaginations.

Sometimes, in the bitter sea of our body, a fierce tempest arises that seems to submerge beneath its waves our soul—the ship of God. Not that he sleeps, but only seems to, so that our cries may reach him who with a word can make us safe and still our sea so that we may the quicker walk dry-shod through it to the promised land of purity of heart.

I am no less anxious to explain these human miseries than to describe the heights of contemplation which we shall not reach if we err in the former : and lest what is a small error at first should be serious in the end, beware of pitfalls. I mean our evil inclinations and the devil's snares : we can hardly tell which, for they conspire together, like Eve and the serpent against Adam, Achab and Jezabel against Elias, Herod and Herodias against S. John Baptist. The safest course is to take sword in hand so that, come what may, they shall not deceive us.

CHAPTER IX

EVIL THOUGHTS

SOME temptations of the kind proceed from evil imaginations and others do not. The first are well known, for many people suffer from them daily. The devil brings before you all your past sins to show you that you were then his special friend and wish to be so no longer ; but at least he wishes you to repay him with some feeling of pleasure in return for that he gave you.

At other times the devil presents things to our mind in a confused manner, as though we had decided to carry out what he tempts us with : he instils it with such subtlety into our imagination that we seem to think of it and consent at the same instant. We are astonished at ourselves afterwards. Who blinded us ? How could we have been so carried away ? How could we have been so led astray at such an unseasonable time ? This sudden kind of temptation is used by Satan against those who he knows will not listen to him, but will detect his malice at once and send him off with a blow. Hence he seeks some more rapid way, that wounds before its presence is known, like a pertinacious disputant who sets forth his case and replies himself for his adversary, without giving him time to answer. If the demon can bring so

much to our memory in so short a time, and confuse and embarrass us with his representations, you will say he is like a wolf who so stupefies and shocks a man by the sudden sight of him as to daze him for the moment.

The best remedy for this is to listen to reason and at once detest and abominate all immodesty, remembering that you are the tried and loyal servant of the spotless Virgin, the Mistress of all chaste souls and that her blessed Son, our God, lived purely in the flesh to give us an example. He hates all impure thoughts more than hell, and watches our heart to see whether we drive them away at once.

If wrong thoughts trouble us and the devil's tricks make us think we have consented, it is well to ask ourselves whether we should commit such crimes. If our conscience tells us that we should not, it is perfectly clear that what passed was nothing but a taunt of the devil. He will be the worse confounded if we tell him that we shall win the throne he lost, however much it grieves him, and he will be caught in his own traps. If God permits, and your lukewarm love for him deserves that your will should not at once recoil nor renounce the sin that presents itself to your mind, I think you should reason with yourself: 'Think how you will dare to return to God or appear before his blessed Mother if once you withdraw from them. Do you not know how the devil, desirous of your damnation, awaits the result of your offence? What about the Passion of Jesus Christ? What of the companionship of God's servants, of the glory of heaven, of the saints to whom you have commended yourself? What will become of your devotion to God and the services you have rendered to him? What of the advice of your superiors, the vow you made and swore, of your obedience to the divine commandments, the good desires with which you entered religion, the pardon of your past sins? What will be the use of the sufferings you have borne and the resistance you made to similar temptations? Remember that you are to be the companion of angels, the child of God, the friend of virgins, fellow-sufferer with the martyrs, the citizen of heaven where none but noble souls are received. Show manly courage, cast away children's playthings, do not suffer yourself to fall: think of the terrible disgrace of being conquered when there are so many victors. Fight bravely in God's strength, for he will bring your enemies to nothing.'

These and other words of self-reproach may be uttered by him who is not so strong in love for God as to understand clearly the hatefulness of sin. Believe me, if you act thus, though the devil

may think he has overcome you, it will give you such courage that you will attack him instead, as Abner turned on the swift-footed Asabel who perfidiously pursued him.

CHAPTER X

TEMPTATIONS THAT DO NOT MAKE USE OF REASON

THERE is another kind of temptation unaccompanied by any forethought. It occurs to but few people, for the devil only uses it when every other means fails, nor do I think our Lord would allow it except in the case of those he has chosen for a high state of sanctity, for the fiercest battle wins the greatest victory. You could hardly believe what suffering it causes certain people, and at the very time when they are striving most to prepare themselves to approach with utmost purity and fervour to God. Their temptation is strongest on the chief festivals when they keep most careful guard over themselves ; when they receive our Lord with the most fervent desire, they are the more molested. The wonder is that these temptations are not accompanied by a crowd of imaginations or the thought of evil, for the whole soul is concentrated on God. Then, if they allow their attention to be distracted by any passing thought, their passion subsides, and by forgetting God they are not so troubled.

Several people who have been thus afflicted have come to me. After having questioned them narrowly, examined the matter, and consulted sagacious persons who have experienced many of the devil's tricks and learnt much about them, I have been convinced that Christians who were so fervent interiorly, their will and understanding and whole inward being concentrated on God, could not have their imagination disturbed by the devil. He found them so preoccupied, as S. Jerome advises, that he could find no place in them. But what he could not cause within, he brought about outside them, by promoting a violent temptation, to prevent which the soul left its former occupation, weakening its close attention to God, in order to defend itself against the assault made upon it by its enemy elsewhere. Satan, like another Benadab, seeing that he could not overcome on the mountains, the highest spiritual exercises of the soul, resolved to do battle in the valley, man's lower nature ; but on the soul's trust in the Lord increasing, his all-powerful hand sets all things right. If the sons of the great warrior Israel earnestly beg God for his blessing, he removes from them all foul occasion of falling.

He who does not draw near to God for fear of any kind of temptations, does not believe that the Lord truly loves him, for love is never hindered nor can any obstacle destroy it, as S. Jerome says. It gathers strength in the face of difficulties and strives more forcibly to win what it desires, like the Canaanitish woman, whose importunate prayer obtained her daughter's delivery from the devil's attacks. So, when you feel that your flesh is suffering wrongfully, never withdraw from God, but call with greater earnestness on the Apostles, the saints, and Christ who is all-powerful, and he will praise your urgency of petition, though he may not grant it at once as you desire.

To reassure your conscience, understand that there is a great difference between feeling and consent. Then you will feel quite safe and have no scruple, knowing that there is no sin in one's feelings about anything in this world, however wrong they may be. The sin lies in consenting to and taking pleasure in them. But as we cannot clearly and certainly make this distinction, we often fear guilt where there is really occasion of merit, because our bodies have a natural inclination to material pleasures. But unless a man's free-will deliberately delights in and welcomes them, there is no sin, for the wrong does not consist in the first but in the second point, in which the reason withdraws from God to enjoy what is evil. But sometimes, on sudden, trying occasions, we cannot feel sure of what really happened and tremble when we have nothing to fear.

Many authorities say that if a man does not know for certain whether he consented to a corporal or spiritual feeling, he should decide that he did not consent. Evidently, if he is in doubt, he did not, for no one would know better than himself if he had.

There is also the possibility of his adding to the temptation on his own part, as by judging rashly of other people, which may make him fear he has sinned in that way, for it is clear that if on some slight grounds he decided that some one else has sinned mortally, he himself will be punished for the sin he attributed to another.

Again, if some temptation comes to a man through a good work he performs, he would give up the work but for the fear that it might be wrong to cease from what he has begun. In this case it is certain that he has not consented.

By these and other conjectures, you may learn whether you have resisted temptation or not. But you must confess what is certain as certain, and what is doubtful as uncertain, for as Gerson

says, a certain and not doubtful absolution is given when the penitent gives a true account of his feelings and does not omit aggravating circumstances, though there is no need to mention anything else.

Whether you are tempted to impurity or despair, or anger, hatred, jealousy, or any other sin, so long as your reason is opposed, yet so far as you can you reject the temptation and wish to be freed from it, you are not committing the sin, but may rather be looked upon as suffering it. You will not be judged for feeling the temptation unless your reason and will consent, but if they do, you will be judged for it.

Setting apart consent, this is the safe course to take in any temptation. It would be a small thing if you were only safe and did not win a crown of victory—a crown which is so precious when given as a reward for absolute resistance to the devil, that it excels in glory that given to many martyrs, for such souls have been attacked every day, while some of the martyrs have passed from this life after but little suffering.

Then do not let temptations alarm you, but rely for resistance on the grace that is given to those who fight lawfully. Seeing that the world, the flesh, and the devil, and those on their side never mean well, but aim at overthrowing and conquering you, take all from the hand of God, whose aim is never bad and who does not allow his own to be tempted except to give them an opportunity of gaining merit. If he permits you to be tempted to any vice, it is not in order that you should be corrupted, but that the opposite virtue should be increased and you should win a double reward.[1] A man who is meek without being persecuted has only one crown, but when he remains meek though molested and injured by others, he has a double crown. It is the same with the other virtues that are more glorious when assailed by the opposite vices, like men who live on the frontier, who by their frequent combats are made better men. This is what our Letter means by saying that temptations are messengers announcing coming graces.

[1] ' We cannot be angels in this world, for it is not our nature. Therefore I do not feel alarmed at seeing a soul greatly tempted, which will benefit it if it has fear and love of our Lord, for I know it will come out with great gain. When I see anyone, like some people I have met, always calm and never meeting with any conflict, although I do not witness her offend God, yet I always feel misgivings about her, and since the devil leaves her alone, I try to prove her in every possible way, so that she may discover what she really is ' (*Concep.* ch. ii).

TWENTY-FIRST TREATISE

TREATS OF PEACE OF SOUL, SAYING: 'KEEP THE INNERMOST DEPTH OF YOUR MIND CALM AND SILENT.'[1]

CHAPTER I

A PEACEFUL MIND COMES FROM A GOOD CONSCIENCE

IF we choose to learn from the created things of this greater world that is given us as a book and example of what we must have within us, for we are a minor world, we shall find that all natural movement tends to quiet, and that all things strive for it. Nothing moves except with the aim of obtaining rest, which all things seek as their ultimate end. Nor should man be less anxious to secure peace of soul, since, besides his natural inclinations for it, he has reason, which demands repose and peace. To this Holy Scripture also incites us, saying: 'A secure mind is like a continual feast.'[2]

This interior security and repose is not obtained in such perfection by studied meditation as by recollection, the quieting of the heart, for as the sage says: 'Much study is an affliction of the flesh.'[3] The gloss adds that it is also an affliction of the spirit, because, on account of our low grade of thought, man can best draw near to God when, ceasing to reason, he contents himself with simple faith that suffices to introduce him to sublime mysteries, as S. Augustine says. He should strive not so much to understand, as to kindle within himself spiritual love for that highest good of which the Faith teaches, which is the life of our soul. And because, as S. Bonaventure declares, it often happens that the tree of knowledge prevents our eating of the tree of life, this Letter bids us keep our mind in peace and silence.

It tells us to do two things: to calm the mind and quiet it. The mind has two aspects: it guides us as to what we must or must not do, and scrutinizes secret and hidden things. It is therefore both practical and speculative.

[1] Treatise XXI, the Letter Y, gives in the Spanish: *Yntimamente asosiega y acalla tu entendimiento.*

[2] Prov. xv, 15. [3] Eccles. xii, 12.

In its first, practical office, it forms and directs our actions : by this means the conscience tells man what is his duty, for the human mind, illuminated naturally by the light of God, shows us what is right and wrong for us. It contains the spark of reason, which exists even in hell and never ceases to bark and growl against evil.

I say that this protest or warning against evil dwells in the mind because, being natural and necessary for man, it is not said to pertain to the will, which, being free, has no determined object or action to which it necessarily inclines us. Therefore the conviction and prompting of the conscience, its self-accusation, remorse, self-blame, or the good testimony it bears, the freedom from blame it affords when our intention was right, its preventative treatment which is a department of the reason, all belong radically and chiefly to the mind, which from the highest part of our soul, like a guard on a watch-tower, tell us what we ought to do. Its conviction and admonition are so sure that even in the midst of sin it never ceases pricking and wounding the heart, making us realize the evil of our ways. This is symbolized by Ezechiel, who saw four animals, each of which had four faces : that of an eagle, a man, a lion, and an ox, the symbol of four qualities we all bear within us.

The man's face means the reason we all possess : the lion's our anger or fierceness in perseverance in opposing difficulties. The face of the ox denotes the strength of our desire for what we wish. A doctor of the Church declares that the first is placed in the fortress of the brain ; the second in the gall ; the third in the liver. The fourth, the eagle's face, the image of the synteresis, is above all, and is called the spark of the conscience which did not die out even in Cain. It does not mingle with the three first, for though overcome by self-indulgence or wrath, and even sometimes misled by an appearance of reason, we still feel that we are sinning. This is because the synteresis cries out against us, not taking part with the rest, but like the watchman on the tower, warning us and punishing our errors. This synteresis is the Spirit that ' asketh for us with unspeakable groanings.'[1]

The synteresis, the highest part of our reason, is also figured in the eagle seen by S. John, that cried out against those who dwell in the earth, meaning those who live in earthly bodies. It pertains especially to the understanding, if reduced to its first principle, the office of which is to reprehend evil and incline us to what is right. In these two things consists the natural law

[1] Rom. viii, 15.

given to our understanding, like the two tables of stone written with the finger of the living God. They were said to be of stone because the writing cannot be erased, but remains as though engraved on a durable material.

To calm our understanding we must avoid sin, or it will become angry and reproach us, telling us that things are not going well. We can only keep it calm by agreeing with our adversary, as the Gospel bids us. Then we shall live in peace like him who said: 'My heart doth not reprehend me in all my life.'[1] Job must have kept his understanding calm, which shows his virtue, for as S. Gregory says: 'If a man's deeds oppose God's commandments, whenever he hears them, his heart upbraids him and he is confused, for they reveal his omissions so that his conscience secretly accuses him of having erred.'

Man bears within himself a witness of all his faults, which he must acknowledge with sorrow either here or before God's judgement seat, for as the sage says, our conscience knows we have said and even done what harmed others, and knows it, not in order to conceal it, but to bear witness against us. But with all this, there are men who stop God's voice and stifle the remonstrance of conscience, not permitting it to speak; or rather, treat it with such contempt that it is hoarse with shouting. They listen to it no more than if they were mill-stones, and live in perfect peace and repose. Not that their understanding is at rest or ceases to keep alight the spark that burns their conscience when they err, but they keep it submerged, sunk deep in the well of evil customs. There they hide the light and cover it by adding sin after sin with an easy heart. Of such men Holy Scripture says that some who are wicked feel as secure as though they had followed justice.

This is a wrongful peace of the perverse, who not through ignorance, but through malice, will not face their evil state.[2] When conscience reproves them, they force it to rebound as the hard ground makes a ball bounce back, without listening to a word it says. Such men lose their reason as though they were drunk; they hearken neither to God, to their conscience, their good angel, a preacher, nor a wise counsellor. They say: 'I shall have peace,

[1] Job xxvii, 6.

[2] 'When wordly minded people feel very placid though they commit heinous offences, and are untroubled by their sins, so that conscience does not upbraid them, their peace, as you have read, comes from their being friends with the devil, who while they live wages no war on them, for such is their malice that to save themselves trouble they would, to a certain extent, return to God although they do not love him' (*Concep.* ch. ii, 1).

and will walk on in the naughtiness of my heart : and the drunken may consume the thirsty.'[1]

In time of war, tipsy men feel as safe as though all were at peace. Though they hear the noise of arms and soldiers, they take it all for fencing with sticks and athletic sports. They think it is a time for amusement, take it all for a joke, and the tumult of war that ought to frighten them makes them more unbridled than ever. So with the hardened sinner : his soul is so intoxicated with vice that he ridicules even the pains of hell and the divine judgements. The more such a man is rebuked, the worse he becomes, because his soul is inebriated with pleasures and his heart is given up to wrong desires. He intends to quench their thirst, but they increase as they are indulged, as drink provokes the drunkard's cravings.

If you wish to establish your mind in a rightful peace so that it shall not reproach you, do nothing blameworthy or wrong. Then its spark will not burn your heart, but will give a soft light to your soul, inciting it to better things that will bring it joy and happiness. S. Augustine advises : ' You who seek the true rest promised to Christians after this life, will taste it sweetly here also amid the bitter trials of earth, if you love the commandments of him who promised that heavenly rest. For you will soon find that the fruits of justice taste sweeter than those of wickedness and will more truly rejoice in a good conscience among trials than in a bad conscience in the midst of riches.'

This peace was obtained by the simple, upright man who feared God, whose conscience never reproached him in all his life. That he won such confidence by this means is proved by his address to our Lord God : ' I feared all my works, knowing that thou didst not spare the offender.'[2] This saint was wonderfully vigilant, for he examined all his works, not recalling the mercy of God before he sinned, like those who say that his clemency is wonderful and he will not record sins. It is prudent to remember God's justice before committing sin to prevent ourselves falling into it ; and if we sin, to think of his mercy at once.[3] The devil aims at

[1] Deut. xxix, 19. [2] Job ix, 28.

[3] S. Teresa speaks of ' persons who are careful not to offend God mortally—indeed, as the world goes, it is a great thing for them to have got so far. Though such people avoid grave faults, yet I believe they fall into them occasionally, for they care nothing at all about venial sins, though they commit many every day, and are thus on the point of mortally offending God. They ask : " Do you scruple about that ? " (as I have heard many of them say) " This fault will be effaced with a little holy water and the remedies of our Holy Mother Church." How

the reverse, so that men may fall more readily and repent less, like Judas who for fear of divine justice did not return to God, thinking that his sin exceeded the Lord's mercy. If he had thought of this beforehand, he would not have fallen so easily. Holy Job does not deny God's mercy by saying that he will not forgive past sin, but says that he does not forgive those who are sinning now, for he never pardons guilt unless a man renounces it.

Job does not fear sin lightly, as though the soul was freed from it directly or soon after abandoning it; he fears it as a thing which, once entered on, allows of no escape. We are more afraid of falling into a well from which we cannot escape than of slipping into a ditch out of which we can jump. A sinner throws himself into a well from which he cannot emerge by his own strength, but only by the almighty hand of the Lord which will draw him out if he prays for help. But as no man knows whether he will have time to cry out and repent he should fear to fall. If he keeps this in mind, knowing that he cannot by his own strength escape from the upper hell constituted by sin, though he may do wrong, he will stay his feet from slipping into the lowest depths.

He who is thus vigilant will soon be able to set his mind completely at rest, for it will have no complaint to make against his heart. Then it may be said of him: 'He that is aware of the snares is secure.'[1] Holy Scripture calls sins the 'snares of death': by avoiding them we shall have a good and tranquil conscience. This, as Hugh says, is always amiable and a burden to no one. It gains pleasure from its friends and patience from its enemies: is a well-wisher to all and shows kindness whenever it can. S. Bernard teaches: 'A good conscience is a diploma of religion, the temple of Solomon, the field of benediction, the garden of delights, the golden guest-chamber, the joy of angels, the ark of friendship, the royal treasure, the hall of God's justice, the dwelling-place of the Holy Ghost, the closed and sealed book that will be opened on the day of judgement.' Meanwhile the devout Christian rests in it as in his own house, as the sage says: 'When I go into my house, I shall repose myself with her: for her conversation hath no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness.'[2]

very sad this is! For the love of God be most watchful; never let the thought of so simple a remedy make you careless about committing a venial sin, however small: what is good ought never to lead us into evil. If you remember this resource after you have fallen—well and good!' (*Concep.* ch. ii).

[1] Prov. xi, 15. [2] Wisdom viii, 16.

If it is a joy to live in a good house, much more so is it to dwell in a good conscience. The just enter it when they think over what they have done and find in it a very pleasant dwelling-place and companionship. Its 'conversation hath no bitterness' because it does not reproach its owner, but bears him glorious testimony. He rejoices with it on account of the good fruits, 'the children of benediction,' that will result.

CHAPTER II

HOW TO SEEK FOR A QUIET CONSCIENCE

MAN'S whole care must consist in seeking for this peace and quietude of a good conscience, for all our good lies in that.[1] This Letter bids us calm our mind, which we shall do if we uproot all vice and implant in it by every means the opposite virtue, that it may flourish in our heart. Thus our active understanding, which dictates to us what we should do, will be satisfied, seeing that we receive or anticipate its good counsel. Then our conscience will be at peace on all sides, like another Solomon. Of this Jeremias says: 'Seek the peace of the city, to which I have caused you to be carried away captives; and pray to the Lord for it: for in the peace thereof shall be your peace.'[2] The city means the union of citizens—our good conscience in which many good things are united. We cannot arrive at this by our own power and must beg our Lord to preserve its peace and quiet so that we may be at peace with him and the words of the sage may not be applied to us: 'The heart of a fool is as the wheel of a cart: and his thoughts are like a rolling axle tree.'[3]

The wheel of a cart, unoiled, creaks and grates, and the heart of the sinner cannot rest because of the reproaches of his conscience: it runs round, yet stays in the same place, for he does not turn away from what his conscience upbraids him with. Therefore he is at peace neither with himself nor God, and can never recollect himself nor silence his understanding.

I speak of peace of conscience here, though I mentioned it elsewhere, to show that recollection of soul must be built on this foundation; without it, nothing can be lasting. Those who do

[1] On this point S. Teresa says: 'You ought to know that the foundation of all must be a good conscience; you ought to make every effort to free yourselves even from venial sin and to do what is most perfect (*Camino*, ch. v, 2).

[2] Jer. xxix, 7. [3] Ecclus. xxxiii, 5.

not found on this will be like the man who built on sand, whose house fell at once. God must set peace in our borders by rectifying our actions, so that we may be filled with the fat of wheat—the Divinity of Christ. Then, as Isaias says: 'The work of justice shall be peace,'[1] for this peace of recollection is only given to men of good will: men with a clear conscience. We ought to pray for the things that pertain to the peace of Jerusalem: that is, according to Job, submission to God. Thus we shall have peace and good fruits from it, doubtless from the Holy Ghost himself, who so fructifies in the soul pleasing to him that it may be said of it: 'A virtuous woman rejoices her husband, and shall fulfil the years of his life in peace.'[2]

The strong woman, whom it is hard to find, gives peace to the Holy Ghost, her husband, whose delights are to be with the children of men, that he may fill them with gifts in the sovereign peace of recollection that exceeds all joys of the senses and keeps our hearts and minds. Thus, the riotous crowd of thoughts being sent away, Christ our Lord resuscitates the maiden, our soul, to a new manner of life, that it may contemplate him risen and seated on the same throne as the Father, that is, in his Essence.

This quiet of the understanding includes more than peace of conscience, to which it greatly adds, for as S. Gregory declares, everyone who disposes himself to obey the commandments of life, before he receives eternal life enjoys the beginning of future security. Though this is proper to every clear conscience, the recollected must pacify the cares that molest their mind more completely, and feel greater detachment regarding the events of this life, which rather surprise than torment them. They, as it were, dwell in the present, feeling no anxiety about the future.

Take Seneca's advice and do not make yourself miserable before the hour comes or go to meet misfortunes. Do not picture them beforehand, but think that perhaps they will never happen. Indulge in no groundless suspicions. Turn your back on any business that you can avoid. Do not seek your own interests, but those of Jesus Christ. Look upon yourself as a plant on the face of the earth, for which little suffices. Make small account of yourself, that you may make much of God. Despise yourself, that you may throw off worldly cares and find the true peace of humility that neither fears to fall nor hopes to rise. Do not return to this world's interests if you wish to enjoy tranquillity, nor care for making friends or acquaintances, or reckon on their support or aversion, that you may the better keep your soul in quiet. Trust

[1] Isa. xxxii, 17. [2] Ecclus. xxvi, 2.

confidently in our Lord God who, if you are silent, will bring your cause to light. Fear not to lose or seek to gain, for you will not lose the means of supporting life, nor will you ever gain all that will satisfy your desires. Perhaps what you gained in material things might be your loss in spiritual matters, which happens as a rule. Finally, to set your soul at peace, be sure that no one can deprive you of the virtues or make you sin against your will by force.

CHAPTER III

HOW TO SILENCE OUR UNDERSTANDING

THE second counsel of this Letter is that we should silence our understanding. By this, as we began to explain, is meant our speculative understanding which turns over and speculates curiously on hidden matters. The recollected should avoid such subjects in order to know God by the negative way of which we speak, for according to S. Gregory, whatever we may behold in contemplation is not God, but what we know is true when we fully realize that we can know nothing of him.

Not only does it benefit the recollected to have chosen this narrow way that leads unto life; not only do they gain by silencing their understanding so that they may know God in a higher and more suitable manner, but it also aids them to pray more purely and manifest with greater brevity all that they seek. Our Lord bade us not to speak much in our prayer, for he knows what we need before we ask for it, since he is the God of all knowledge.

By calming the mind and leaving the will to invoke God, brief prayer is made which penetrates heaven at once. It is brief, not because it takes little time but because no means are used to address God save love, which can unite itself to him without delay. Faith will no longer exist in heaven, S. Paul tells us. It belongs to the intellect, which does not now attain directly to God without the intervention of creatures, that are the cause of its knowledge, for we know him through them since they gave us news of him. But we do not love him for their sake but for himself alone. The charity we have here will continue in heaven, for it joins us directly with God on earth and will do so there, though it will unite us more closely to him then, for it will be stronger.

Our understanding leads us to God in order that we may know him, and as it cannot show him to us as he is but only according to our feeble intellect and in the manner in which it can receive him, clearly we must learn about him by some other means. As

love draws us out of ourselves to set us in that which we love, it penetrates the most hidden mysteries, leaving the understanding outside among creatures. As S. Cyprian says: 'Affirmation regarding God cannot easily be made, for the Divinity cannot be defined, but is more clearly and truly explained by stating what God is not than by defining what he is. Not being a matter subject to the senses, he exceeds all understanding, and whatever can be heard, seen, or known, does not pertain to his Majesty. Anything that can be known by the senses is too coarse for comparison with him. Our sight is blinded by the invisible light and inaccessible Being who is surrounded by Seraphims with six wings who conceal him as they stand or fly around him. By standing they demonstrate the immobility of eternity, and by flight God's sublimity which is so elevated that, let man raise his heart as he may, God exalts himself above it and escapes from the importunity of human comprehension, for, according to S. Cyprian, God our Lord mounts above, and even opposes the speculations of our intellect, acute as it may be.

Holy Scripture often advises us to await in silence our salvation, for thus during all our interior states we shall preserve an intermediate state of silence as the saints did, so that into this connecting world the almighty Word may descend from the royal throne into our heart. It is no easy task to keep silent, for the devil with his army of thoughts tries to prevent it so that our Lord should not rest in perfect repose within the heaven of our soul. It is to afford him this rest, S. Gregory says, that we try to keep this silence which we must strive to preserve, even though but for the space of half an hour. He who bade them not to awake the beloved until she pleased will not fail you, so that of your defence in this secret and hidden place in which you dwell, it may be said: 'They rejoiced because they were still: and he brought them to the haven which they wish for.[1] Let the mercies of the Lord give glory to him, and his wonderful works to the children of men.'[2] According to the gloss this haven for which

[1] Speaking of divine union, S. Teresa says: 'All the graces here divinely bestowed upon the soul come through no action of its own except its total abandonment of itself to God. They are given in peace and silence, like the building of Solomon's temple when no sound was heard. It is thus with this temple of God, this mansion of his where he and the soul rejoice together in profound silence. The mind need not act nor search for anything, as the Lord who created it wishes it to be at rest and only to watch through a little chink what passes within' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iii, 9).

[2] Ps. cxxxvi, 30, 31.

the Lord is to be praised for bringing us to is the quietude desired by the just, that is obtained by silencing the understanding by means of interior calm.[1] Since our efforts cannot stop its ceaseless questionings, David says that it was God who brought us to the wished-for peace. But for this we must do our utmost to quiet our mind, so that 'the work of justice shall be peace,' as Isaias says,[2] though on our part the silence may be defective and only for the space of half an hour, as S. John writes. Yet we must not cease to seek it, for our Lord can perfect it as he promised by the prophet: 'In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: Fear not. To Sion: Let not thy hands be weakened. The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, he will save thee: he will rejoice over thee with gladness, he will be silent in his love, he will be joyful over thee in praise.'[3]

A wonderful silence, most worthy of admiration and praise, is the silence of love in which our mind dwells in deepest calm, being wholly satisfied with the joy experienced, for we know that when two who love one another are together, they are silent, for love supplies the want of words.

All the child's fears cease when its mother embraces it; it cares no more to speak and love makes her silent. Oh, how unspeakable, how inexplicable is the silence imposed by love between God and the soul, when he descends upon it like a river of peace and a sweet stream of honey; when from him who is the living Fount, the waters of Siloe 'go with silence'; when words failing, deeds take their place! The soul says nothing, for it knows not what to ask for since all its desires are granted; God utters no

[1] 'Mark well what I say, for it is most important. When the will enjoys this quiet, it should take no more notice of the understanding (or imagination) than if it were an idiot. If it tries to compel the imagination to keep it company, it will perforce be preoccupied and disturbed and in a state of painful struggle: thus, instead of profiting, the soul will lose what God was giving it without its having made any effort' (*Camino*, ch. xxxi, 7).

[2] Isa. xxxii, 17.

[3] Soph. iii, 16, 17. 'Thou, my true Lover, didst begin this war of love, which seems nothing but an inquietude and failing of all the powers and senses, which go through the streets and lanes, imploring the daughters of Jerusalem to tell them where is their God. Against whom do the powers of the soul strive, during this contest, save him who has taken possession of the fortress they once held—the highest part of the soul? From this he has ejected them, and they now return to oust their Conqueror; at last, weary of absence from him, they yield themselves up. Thus, losing all their strength, they fight far better than before, and by surrendering to their Victor, triumph over him finally' (*Exclamations, Minor Works of S. Teresa*, p. 106).

word, for he cannot blame one who shows such signs of tenderness. The soul sees that love has made it pure as when it came from the hands of its Creator that it may contain its Lord, who casts away all its sins so that it is like a dove washed with milk and made immaculate by grace. It sleeps, for it no longer cares to reason, yet its heart waketh, for love does not sleep in peace in one who loves. The understanding and the will slumber, for the soul is united to God and made one spirit with him. Then there is the Sabbath of Sabbaths, for the tranquillity of the fancy that formerly troubled the imagination causes the quietude of the will, which being wholly enkindled and absorbed in what is not consumed, does not require the fuel of the reason to prevent its fire from dying out.

The Queen of Saba and King Solomon exchanged rich gifts and returned one another's love in the silence of solitude. God speaks to the heart not with words but by seraphic communications, by signs more explicit than was ever any language. Finally God and the soul are silent like friends sleeping in safety in a guest-chamber, whom affection has made of one mind, so that they never differ from one another, and it may be said that what the one does, the other imitates.[1]

CHAPTER IV

THE THREE KINDS OF SILENCE

THERE are three principal kinds of silence in recollection, setting aside others that are less important. The first is when all fancies, imaginations, and species of visible things cease in the soul, so that all created things are mute. This is what holy Job desired when he said: 'For now I should have been asleep and still, and should have rest in my sleep. With kings and consuls of the earth, who built themselves solitudes.'[2] According to S. Gregory, we sleep to temporal things and are still interiorly when we retire into the secret of our soul to contemplate the Creator. The saints, here called kings and consuls, build themselves solitudes when

[1] 'From the bosom of the Divinity, where God seems ever to hold this soul fast clasped, issue streams of milk that solace the servants of the castle. I think he wishes them to share, in some way, the riches the soul enjoys; therefore from the flowing river in which the little streamlet is swallowed up some drops of water flow now and then to sustain the bodily powers, the servants of the bride and Bridegroom' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. ii, 7).

[2] Job iii, 13, 14.

they desire nothing in this world and their hearts are not disturbed by a tumult of unruly longings. Casting away all illicit desires with the right hand of holy reasoning, despising all transitory things and the extravagant ideas to which they give rise, they only covet the eternal mansions, and as they love nothing here below, enjoy deep tranquillity of mind.

The second silence of recollection is when the soul, at perfect rest, enjoys a kind of spiritual idleness, and sits like Mary at our Lord's feet, saying: 'I will hear what the Lord will speak in me,' and he answers: 'Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear, and forget thy people and thy father's house.'

This kind of silence may well be compared to hearing, for one who listens is not only silent but does not wish others to interrupt and prevent his hearing him who talks, especially when, as in the present case, he does not know where the speaker is. For as the Gospel says, we hear the voice of God, that is, his inspiration, and know not whence it comes and whither it goeth[1]; therefore we should be very quiet and listen intently.

There are two kinds of silence: in the one, our imagination and the thoughts that hover in our memory cease; the other is a forgetfulness of our very selves and a complete turning of our inward being to God alone.

The first silence is that of outward things in our regard; the second a rest of perfect calm in which we are silent to ourselves and turn to God with receptive, ready submission. This is figured by the sacred animals of Ezechiel, of which it is said: "For when a voice came from above the firmament, that was over their heads, they stood, and let down their wings.'[2] As I said, the voice is the divine inspiration received by the ear of the soul without the sound of words, but solely with the presence of God that makes itself felt. Therefore Eliphaz the Themanite says there was a word spoken to him in private, and his ears by stealth, as it were, received the veins of its whisper.[3]

This inspired voice is above the firmament, the superior part of the reason that is united immediately to God by love. The sacred winged animals, or contemplatives, are said to be standing, because when this voice is heard the soul rises to sublime heights, remaining suspended, and, as it were, transported in God like the Apostles when they saw him ascend to heaven. So Ezechiel was commanded to stand upon his feet that God might speak to him, for as S. Gregory says, standing denotes silent wonder that

[1] S. John iii, 8. [2] Ezech. i, 25.
[3] Job xii, 4. Fray Osuna, by mistake, ascribed these words to Job,

makes us dependent on God as Eliphaz elected that his soul should be ; then the operation of the powers almost ceases, so that by their decrease, the soul may receive wisdom.

To let down the wings is to employ the higher powers for the reception of the Divine influence that infuses itself into the soul. In this, the gloss declares, contemplatives consider their own strength of no avail. But they centre themselves on God in silence so that, though wanting in themselves, they may find themselves in him, as it is written : ' My soul refused to be comforted ; I remembered God, and was delighted, and was exercised, and my spirit swooned away."[1]

The third silence of our understanding takes place in God, when the soul is wholly transformed in him and tastes abundantly of his sweetness, in which it sleeps as in a wine cellar[2] and is silent and desires no more, being satisfied. It sleeps even to itself, forgetting its own frail nature on seeing itself so deified and united to its Pattern, clothed in his brightness like another Moses after having entered the cloud that crowned the mountain. S. John experienced this even more fully, when after the Last Supper he leaned upon our Lord's breast and for the time all his senses were in silence.

In this third silence the understanding is so mute and taken captive—or rather, so occupied—that it cannot tell what is said to it or what is passing around, since what it hears conveys no meaning to it. Concerning this, an old man whom I confessed, who had had more than fifty years' experience in such matters, told me as a great secret that, among other mystic happenings, he had often listened to sermons and discourses about God without understanding a word, his mind being so hushed and occupied with spiritual matters that nothing created could take shape in it. I told him that he ought to have withdrawn into solitude ; he answered that the voices sounded like organs and pleased his soul, though he could not follow their sense, and that he used them

[1] Ps. lxxv, 3.

[2] Commenting on the words : ' He brought me into the cellar of wine,' S. Teresa writes : ' The soul is not awake enough even to love—but blessed is the sleep and happy the inebriation that make the Bridegroom supply what the bride cannot do. He " set it in such wonderful order " that though all its powers are dead or asleep, love remains active. Without knowing how it works, yet by the ordinance of God, it works in so wonderful a manner that it becomes one with the Lord of love who is God himself. All this takes place with infinite purity, because there is no obstacle in the senses or powers—I mean either in the understanding or memory—nor does the will assert itself ' (*Concep.* ch. vi, 5).

as a counterpoint to praise God in a way that could be felt, though he was unable to explain it.

This Letter does not bid us silence our intelligence, but our understanding, because, according to Richard, the comprehension of invisible things belongs to pure intelligence. He says the intelligence is pure when fixed on some sublime truth, free from any admixture of the imagination, and that to attain to this you must gather together the dispersed Israelites, meaning your understanding ; must silence it, and strive to restrain the wanderings of your memory. You must accustom yourself to remain within yourself and to forget all exterior things if you are labouring to obtain contemplation of celestial truths and yearn for experience of divine favours.

According to this theologian, intelligence beholds the invisible things of God, not as they are seen by reason which investigates, and arguing from effects and causes, succeeds in knowing what is concealed or absent as though it really beheld it. Not in this way, but in that by which we, by our bodily sight, look upon things visible, material, and present. Pure intelligence views invisibly that which is invisible, and views in their presence and essence things that are spiritual, with the knowledge that they are neither conjoined with nor derived from external images. Therefore when a man pays no attention to the imagination which employs itself on corporeal things, or to the reason which makes use of material matters as a means to investigate those that are spiritual, but represents God to himself as a most pure Spirit, set apart from all that is visible, and keeps his attention fixed upon this purified conception without wandering, he may then be said to be using his intelligence.

CHAPTER V

OBJECTIONS RAISED BY THE UNDEVOUT AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF RECOLLECTION

THOSE unused to spiritual matters raise many questions and doubts about the motto of this Letter, which they reduce to thinking about nothing at all. They say that if we must calm and silence our understanding, evidently we can think of nothing, so that the satirist's words might be quoted : 'Nothing can come of nothing and nothingness returns to nothing.'

Thus do unspiritual men ridicule this holy exercise. As S. Gregory Nazianzen says : 'Although every one may praise his

own way of prayer, take care not to speak against one of which you know nothing, for besides being rash, you may scandalize those whose hearts draw near to God by a learned ignorance to which the wise and prudent of this world do not attain.'

Do not so take your understanding for your guide that you will only believe what it grasps, or you will gain little knowledge. Say not that it need only subject itself as regards matters of faith, for we believe our elders without demanding proof when their words do not seem against reason. Besides, this exercise is founded on the Catholic Faith, which purifies the hearts of the recollected, and casts from them all created things. Not that these things are wrong, but they are a lesser good than God our Lord, to whom Christ our Redeemer tells us in the Gospel we should approach with a pure spirit.

If you do not understand S. Dionysius yet he can be understood, as he was by Gerson and other holy teachers. They gave advice against the stratagems of the devil, who makes his chief efforts to deceive us in the most sublime practices. If he withdraws us from them, he thinks he has done a great deal, knowing well that if he deters us from them by fear, we shall never reach our goal.

The recollected do not consider that perfection consists in thinking of nothing, or else those who sleep without dreaming or who faint away would be perfect. If you read anywhere that there is merit in not thinking, know that it is intended to teach beginners in this exercise to turn from distractions to God with humility, so that subjecting their understanding to him they can say truly : ' For my heart hath been inflamed, and my reins have been changed : and I am brought to nothing, and I knew not. I am become as a beast before thee, and I am always with thee.'[1]

Gerson thinks that these words apply to recollection, when the understanding being silenced, a man is like the beast of burden on which our Lord rides to Jerusalem, the supreme peace of heart which binds our understanding with the halter of faith to God alone.

If the cessation of the understanding ended in thinking of nothing, not only would it lack perfection but it would be a loss of time that might have been spent in profitable thoughts. But it may lead to perfection if we stop thinking of created things so as to concentrate all our powers solely upon God. For this is needful, especially for beginners, so as to learn to get rid of all distracting thoughts, for, as Gerson says, the main difficulty of

[1] Ps. lxxii, 21–23.

recollection is to free the mind from the fancies that occupy our understanding. This requires time, in order that it may freely direct itself solely, guided by faith alone, to the Unity of God our Lord, which is the one thing necessary that Christ bade us choose as the better part.

Those who follow this way study to awaken in themselves a love for God for love's sake alone—a love that is of full age and can speak for itself. They do not care to find reasons for it : not that this would be wrong, but because they have resolved to love him only and above all things, raising their soul to that supreme Goodness whence love always flows.

The experienced know that the endeavour to understand or to love are two different things. Though we cannot love what we do not understand, it suffices that we should have known God for many years by faith and should be convinced that he alone is worthy of being loved for his own sake. We draw near him, recollecting our heart so as to love him exclusively, and to be almost actually in his presence, for we love our friend at once when we are with him, without previous reflection.

When the understanding ceases its speculations, the will acts powerfully, producing love. So, when the recollected place themselves in God's very presence, they think it would be unnecessary to seek reasons for loving him who is wholly love. They say this has been done and that now they need only have to carry out these reasons as an artist practises the rules of his art without thinking of them.[1]

This absence of thought is more than sleep and can in no way be explained, for God, to whom it is directed, transcends explanation. But this thinking of nothing is thinking of everything, for then we think, without using the reason, on him who is All by his marvellous sublimity. The least advantage of this silent absence of thought in the recollected is a very simple, subtle attention to God alone. During that time, Gerson considers that

[1] S. Teresa says of this : ' With some people, after our Lord has raised them to perfect contemplation . . . the grace of this state remains in their souls in such a way that they cannot reason as before on the mysteries of the Passion and the life of Christ. I cannot account for it, but it is very usual for the mind to remain less apt for meditation. I think it must be because as the one end of meditation is to seek God, after he has once been found, and the soul is accustomed to seek him again by means of the will, it no longer wearies itself by searching for him again with the intellect. It also appears to me that as the will is already inflamed with love, this generous faculty would, if it could, cease to use the reason (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. vii, 9, 10).

the door is shut against all temptations of the devil, who always begins with the senses. Finally this cessation of thought, however insignificant it may be, prepares the heart, by detaching and freeing it, to fly straight to God, who asks that it may be free and entire.

You may conclude that when you silence your understanding, giving it what S. Augustine calls a holy idleness, you must not end there, but must raise the heart's intention and the soul's disposition to attend to God only, with piety and faith, believing this to be a supreme act most pleasing to his Majesty. Though on our part it is always imperfect, for we cannot wholly refrain from thought, our Lord will perfect it, visiting it from on high and putting forth the help of his grace to make silence.

Sometimes the memory and understanding of the recollected are so silenced that while enjoying the grace of God they forget themselves and everything else, being absorbed and inebriated by what they feel. This may be caused by riveting the attention, as happens sometimes when we are talking with great respect to some grandee.

The recollected man is contented with the light of faith that we all possess, and quiets his understanding with this, without wanting to scrutinize divine matters.[1] He knows by faith that God exists and rewards every service rendered him. Believing, with S. Augustine, that God is more within him than he is within himself, he can recollect himself interiorly with the Lord, and entering his house reposes with him whose conversation has no bitterness. As, according to S. Gregory, our soul cannot be long without enjoyment of some sort, if we lock the doors of the senses by which it would descend to earthly things, it will rise of its own accord to seek some higher joy. Favoured by faith, as the Magi were by the star, it will pass all things until it unites itself to that highest spiritual Good, who is so far apart from the unprofitable flesh and anything that can be imagined, so raised above all that is created, so remote from all that can be pictured, that only pure intelligence, void of all understanding, can be united to him.

Close the streams flowing from the fount of your soul from which love ever distils, for then it will be almost forced to rise.

[1] 'When you read a book or hear a sermon or meditate on any mysteries of our holy Faith, if you find you cannot clearly understand the matter, I strongly recommend you not to tire yourselves nor to strain your minds by puzzling over it, for many of these subjects are not suited for women—nor for men either, very often' (*Concep.* i, 1).

Even though it does not ascend, if it is calm and reposes, the image of God will be seen in it as in clear water, for nothing reflects it so well if the tumult of the thoughts that disturb it cease.

It is not without great mystery that Holy Scripture so often bids us enter into ourselves and our own heart, to rejoice within ourselves and not go forth, but close and lock the door securely that God may communicate himself to the soul in secret. We must not open the door of the senses or raise the cross-bars of the watchfulness it must keep, or he will depart who strengthened the bolts of the gates and blessed its children (its desires), within it, as the Psalm says.[1] The more strongly you bolt the door of the senses, the more securely is God fortified in your soul. As he is always within, you need not open to him : only consent to his presence and forbid all else, for when our whole love is set on him, it has greater power with him.[2]

You must not think the less of this exercise because a philosopher or Jew could practise it, or you might find fault with devotion to the Sacred Passion which many loved in olden times. Nor must you consider that what is common to the righteous and the wicked is therefore less good, for it works in each according to his disposition, preserving its own value.

CHAPTER VI

THE SAFETY OF RECOLLECTION FOR THOSE WHO SUCCEED IN PRACTISING IT

SOULS that begin to delight in this exercise consider it so certain and perfect that they are astonished at others' doubts. They are fond of those who love it above all things not because the soul is idle as regards reasoning, but because recollection includes subjects more spiritual and satisfying, refined and immaterial. Therefore Gerson maintains that they surpass other subjects in merit, for theology teaches that the more spiritual the prayer, the more

[1] Ps. xlvii, 13.

[2] Speaking of the joys of contemplation, S. Teresa writes : 'This peace is so deep as to render even breathing troublesome, the powers being so soothed and quiescent that the will is disinclined to admit of any thought, even though it is a good one, nor does it seek for any, nor try to reflect. Such a person need not endeavour to raise her hand or stand to reach the fruit—I mean, she need not make use of the reason, for our Lord gives her the apple from the tree to which she compares him' (*Concep.* v, 4 ; *Castle*, M. v, ch. i, 3 *in fine*).

meritorious and acceptable to God it is, as it requires greater faith and hope.

All these reasons invite you to follow the advice of this Letter, which is needed not only by beginners, but also by proficients, for the devil is wont to disturb their understanding by false words coming from him to the mind, that suggest what appears to be right. Those who are not on their guard believe that God is speaking to them. To deceive them the more completely, the evil one makes them think that no living man ever had such messages, and no one could believe it if he were told of it. So that it is best to silence the understanding so far as possible, to prevent such deceptions, which have misled many.

You may say that if you are to think of nothing created nor to admit thoughts that seem good, and are neither to form them yourself nor seek them elsewhere, it seems as though you must become a lifeless statue.

I do not say there is any good in pure privation, nor in this exercise is there solely pure privation, for by quieting your mind in order to attend better to God, if you direct your heart to him, you do much. If you persevere, you will receive gifts from God who soon infuses his grace, not by way of feigned revelations or prophecies which are like croaking frogs that are never quiet, but by an interior operation that touches the heart. S. Cyprian says of this : ' We taste and experience and smell, and it is near ; but draw near and go farther, and like a flash that rends the clouds, like a meteor that rather dazzles than enlightens, you will sometimes be touched by I know not what, and will feel that you are touched, though you know not by whom ; secret words will be spoken to you interiorly that you cannot repeat, though you cannot doubt them, for he is near and even within you who solicits you.'[1]

This Saint thus states something of what occurs during recollection. He says that the speech heard is ineffable, being rather actions than words, by which, as S. Paul says, the Spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God,[2] giving

[1] ' The Bridegroom increases the soul's longing for him by devices so delicate that the soul itself cannot discern them. . . . These desires are delicate and subtle impulses rising from the inmost depths of the soul. . . . They differ entirely from anything we ourselves can gain. In the present case, even when the mind is not recollected or thinking of God, although no sound is heard, his Majesty arouses it suddenly as by a swiftly flying comet or a clap of thunder. Yet the soul thus called by God hears him well enough ' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. ii, 2).

[2] Rom. viii, 16.

it the perfect trust felt by sons for their father because he treats them well and provides entirely for them.

This proves the excellence of this exercise, which takes no notice of any revelation or of anything that can be spoken about, only of genuine spiritual experience—which, as Gerson says, makes itself known. It is not caused by perplexing the reason, but by an experimental intelligence of what is present to the soul. It greatly soothes the understanding, and so satisfies it that it makes no researches on the subject.

To understand this more fully, you must know that there are interior operations and speech as well as exterior. The words are the thoughts or reasonings we form in our hearts ; the interior actions are an intense concentration on God alone, the love for him produced by our will, and other movements and affections of the soul on which this exercise is based. Therefore our Lord does not respond by words but by acts, seeing that the recollected care for nothing else. These acts silence their understanding, making it stammer like the prophet, and it is struck by wonder, as the Queen of Sheba was at Solomon's magnificence.

To give support to this Letter and the whole of the *Third Alphabet* I quote here from some of the most learned authorities, setting aside other writers highly esteemed as competent judges and the daily witness borne by the recollected of the benefit derived from recollection. These testimonies, though the incredulous doubt them and ought not to be told of them, as S. Dionysius declares, are not therefore worthless, nor are objectors free from blame. As Gerson says, reason requires us to believe what others sincerely affirm, or at least that it should not be obstinately contradicted, otherwise there would be no such thing as polite conversation. Natural law is confirmed by the divine law, which says : ' What thou wouldst not that others should do to thee, that do not to them.'

Some say that they believe in the exercises, but fear to undertake them because of the experiences they forecast. Against this we urge the perfect charity of the saints, who cast aside this dread. Among them was the holy Abbot Isaac, who when speaking on prayer, dwelt much, not without special reason, on the superhuman saying of the holy, persevering worshipper Antony : ' That is not perfect prayer in which the monk knows how he prays.'

He must have truly silenced his understanding who prays so sublimely that he knows not how he prays, and no doubt he receives graces beyond his ken. Of this Hugh[1] says in *De arrha*

[1] Of S. Victor.

animae, in the person of the soul espoused to God: 'Who is this who sometimes touches me and delights me with such vehement tenderness that I seem in a certain manner to go out of myself and know not to what I am raised? My mind rejoices, I forget my griefs, my desires are satisfied, and I find myself transported to I know not where and embraced interiorly with the arms of love. I know not what it is, but I strive with all my heart to hold and never lose it. My soul struggles to detain that which I long to embrace for ever. Is this my Beloved? I beg you to tell me, that I may know who it is and that when he returns, I may beg him not to depart but to remain for ever. Indeed, O soul, it is thy Beloved who visits thee: he comes invisibly, secretly, to hold thee.'

Hugh shows that the understanding cannot behold God on account of the brightness of his countenance when he descends from the mount of glory to communicate himself to us in our vale of tears. Nor can we see him with the eyes of our understanding until he raises the veil of faith that hides him. In death the face of our soul shall behold unveiled which now sees him not immediately. Meanwhile there sometimes happens what Gerson, like S. Dionysius, describes: 'The soul draws near to things that are ineffable and unknown and that it does not understand.' Gerson writes elsewhere: 'This is certainly what we meant by being in silence and enclosing our spirit within us. This is the thing to be achieved; that for which we labour. Constrain yourself to do it with all the nerves of your affections in solitude, raise yourself above yourself if you can, and if after long efforts you are unable, do not at once relinquish them for a book or conversation. If silence tries you and is wearisome, and you think your quietude useless, hope to overcome this delay, for God would never mock your soul as you imagine; he will not forget to show you pity, if you confidently seek and pray and cry to him.'

CHAPTER VII

PRAISE OF RECOLLECTION BY OTHER FAMOUS DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

S. Gregory Nazianzen, stating the reasons why he resigned his bishopric, says: 'I remember my former calm and solitude, and seeing that I was impeded from what I had loved from my childhood and had promised to God when I was in great danger, I resigned all things and departed.' That he here alludes to recol-

lection, he shows by adding : ' Indeed I think nothing more conduces to a happy life than that a man, withdrawn from the world and things of the flesh, retired into himself, and freed from mortal cares, should converse solely with himself and God, so that, raised far above all visible things, his soul may be filled with divine sentiments and heavenly matters, unmixed with worldly cares. Thus, raised far above all that is visible, his soul is filled with divine affections and images, free from all that is of this world, so that it has truly become a spotless mirror of God's likeness, and while still on earth is, in a way, the companion of angels. Despising and casting off human frailties, it is transported to what is sublime by the overshadowing of the Holy Ghost.

' If perchance any of you have felt this fervour, you will understand me. Some people's judgement is warped by envy, so that they misname the best of things : they call pure wisdom the philosophy of Zeno and devout practices ostentation, being more apt at abusing devout practices than at imitating them.'

S. Dionysius counsels : ' Repel vigorously the senses and intellectual actions, together with all that is sensible and intelligible, permanent or transitory, and so far as possible, raise yourself, unknowing, to union with him who is above all substance and knowledge.'

S. Bonaventure explains : ' The elevation effected by not-knowing is nothing but direct elevation by the ardour of love without reflection on creatures, anterior thoughts, or the help of the intellect, so that the soul is aided by affection alone, and during the experience, nothing is learnt through intellectual action.'

Of the three spiritual states of man S. Augustine says : ' Beginners must make use of corporeal forms to attain to love, which is more or less necessary for those who have made progress ; but after some time it is not needed. By corporeal forms or images, I mean those cognisable to the five senses.' S. Bernard, to show that perfect prayer consists in recollection of soul, says : ' May my soul die the death, even though it may be to such happiness as the angels ; so that, transcending the memory of things present, my desires not only for inferior or corporeal things but even for their very semblance may perish. Thus I may hold intercourse with what is pure ; for such a transport is, I believe, usually called contemplation ; for not to be held captive in this life by longings for outward things is a human virtue, but not to be involved in material imaginations and to contemplate God is the angelic purity, though both these states are the product of divine grace ; both are transcendent, and in either case the soul rises above itself. In

the one case it rises very high, in the other not far. Blessed is the man who can say: "Lo, I have gone far off flying away; and I abode in the wilderness."[1] He was not content to go, but went "far off" that he might be quiet. Forsake the desires of the flesh in such a way that you may no longer obey its wishes nor be persuaded by its cajoleries. You have made progress and gone away, but have not gone afar off, unless you can fly away with a pure memory and pass by the material imaginations that arise on every side. Until then, do not promise yourself happiness; you err if you suppose that you will find a place of quiet, the secret of solitude, serene light, and the abode of peace.'

S. Gregory speaks more clearly on this subject: 'The soul cannot possibly recollect itself until it has learnt to deprive its interior eyes of what is seen by the bodily eyes, and of devout fancies and images, and can turn its thoughts from whatever relates to sight, hearing, taste, smell, or touch, for such thoughts produce a kind of interior bodily shadow that revolves in the soul and therefore should be discreetly removed from it.' S. Gregory gives a brief epitome of his other discourses, saying: 'Doubtless it is in the bed that the Beloved should be sought at night,[2] for the invisible Creator, repressing all corporal images, is found in the secrecy of the heart.'

I have only given a few quotations from these holy and learned Doctors of the Church in favour of this Letter. I think they will suffice for outsiders, as the recollected find this exercise spiritually spoken of in every part of Holy Scripture, and still more truly in their own heart, where God so forcibly inscribes it by his grace that, though many consider them fools, as S. Dionysius says, they feel very sure of it through the testimony of their conscience.

If you meet men who judge ill of recollection, believe that it is either from inexperience or ignorance. This does not excuse superiors, who ought to be experts in spiritual matters in order to solve their subjects' doubts and advise them prudently, neither disparaging spiritual exercises nor discouraging those who practise them. For, as Gerson says, speaking of *de verbo gloriae*, recollection neither leads into error (of which it can have no admixture) nor to the deceits of the devil, for the treacherous

[1] Ps. liv, 8.

[2] 'If the soul is not dead, but has a living love for God, is it not a great grace from him that she should feel pained at the least infringement of the vows she has taken or the obligations she is under? Is not the heart in which God implants such solicitude prepared by him as a bed of flowers to which he cannot but come and delight himself, long as his delay may be?' (*Concep.* ii, 7).

doors of the senses, where he begins his attacks, are closed. Hence it is the supreme refuge of the soul in solitude with God.

There are many degrees and kinds of recollection. One consists only in simple mortification of all thought, like a kind of restful slumber and peaceful silence in which nothing is heard and which no one can disturb. It is a wonderful thing that if any thought then comes to the heart, it is stopped so that before the soul knows what it was, it has gone, as though we told someone at a distance not to come near. But this happens so certainly in the soul without its being aware of it previously, that such a person is astonished. If he tries to remember what came to his memory, he cannot; he only knows that something came to disturb him and was prevented. This kind is not the recollection of beginners and is not without grace, for the soul is quite content, though it experiences neither sweetness nor any feeling except pleasure.

There is another more lively recollection in which the intellect alone takes part. In this a man watches vigilantly over his recollection, noticing how it acts and making use of a certain power and energy respecting it as though he supervised his recollection. In this state, proficients often experience great things.

At other times, recollection is a kind of self-forgetfulness in which souls do not know where they are. Afterwards they ask themselves whence it came: what was its effect: what did it mean? But they cannot discover. This kind of recollection is very good and may become a habit with proficients, but they must beware lest their mind should wander to worldly business.

There is still another sort in which the soul is enclosed within the body as in a tightly locked chest: there it rejoices in its spiritual ardour, while as bereft of the senses as though it had none. It understands nothing that can be told, but like a little babe, delights in its mother's bosom,[1] wanting nothing to distract it, neither eyes nor ears nor a door by which to depart.

[1] Speaking of the prayer of quiet, S. Teresa says: 'The soul is here like a babe at the breast of its mother, who, to please it, feeds it without its moving its lips. Thus it is now, for the soul loves without using the understanding. Our Lord wishes it to realize, without reasoning about the matter, that it is in his company. He desires that it should drink the milk he gives and enjoy its sweetness, acknowledging that it is receiving a divine favour, and that it should delight in its own happiness. He does not require the soul to know how it enjoys this nor what it is enjoying, but to forget itself. He who is beside it will care for its highest interests' (*Camino*, xxxi, 7). The Saint wrote on the margin of the Valladolid edition: 'This comparison explains how it is possible to love without knowing that one loves nor how one loves: a most difficult thing to understand.'

In these grades of recollection the understanding is never so far silenced as to be entirely inactive, for it always retains a little spark[1] that suffices to show contemplatives they are experiencing something, and that it comes from God. Thus in peace and silence the understanding reveals what is passing, though it seems doing nothing. But the soul itself does not even wish for this, but longs to die in the Lord and lose itself for his sake. There are times or states in which the understanding entirely ceases working, as though the soul had no intelligence, but then the living spark of simple consciousness appears again. This is wonderful, because it is during the complete cessation of the understanding that the soul receives the most grace. After reviving and coming out of the cloud, the soul finds it possesses this grace without knowing from whence, or how it was received. To obtain more, it wishes to return to its mortification and absence of intel-

'As an infant does not know how it is nourished—indeed often without an effort of its own the milk is put into its mouth—so it is in this case with the graces infused into the soul, which neither knows nor does anything and is unable to perceive whence or how this great grace came to it. It only realizes that this is the keenest delight that can be felt in this life, even if all the world's joy and happiness could be enjoyed at once. . . . It can compare it to nothing except the endearments of a mother, who tenderly loves her child and feeds and fondles it' (*Concep.* ch. iv, 5). S. Teresa here speaks of the prayer of quiet.

[1] The spark is a favourite simile of S. Teresa's; she uses it as an image of love for God. 'The prayer of quiet is a little spark of true love for himself that our Lord begins to kindle in the soul, and his will is that the soul should understand what this love is by the joy it brings. . . . But it becomes cold very soon, for however much we may try to make the fire burn, we do nothing but throw water on it to put it out. However tiny this spark, given by God, may be, it causes a great crackling, and if not quenched by our own fault, begins to enkindle a greater fire which sends forth flames of that most vehement love for God that his Majesty makes perfect souls possess' (*Life*, ch. xv). 'God may be likened to a burning furnace from which a small spark flies into the soul that feels the heat of this great fire, which, however, is insufficient to consume it. The sensation is so delightful that the spirit lingers in the pain produced by its contact . . . the pain is delicious and is not really pain at all, nor does it always continue in the same degree: sometimes it lasts for a long while: on other occasions it passes quickly. This is as God chooses, for no human means can obtain it: and though felt at times for a long while, it is intermittent. In fact it is never permanent and therefore does not wholly inflame the spirit: but when the soul is ready to take fire, the little spark suddenly dies out, leaving the heart longing to suffer anew its loving pangs' (*Castle*, M. vi, ch. ii, 6, 7; see also *Life*, ch. xviii, 4; ch. xxi, 9). S. Teresa says in the *Life*, ch. xviii: 'The soul leaps forth out of itself, like a fire that is burning and has become a flame,' and tells of her heart's being transpierced by a fiery dart.

ligence, like a diver who plunges into the water and comes out with what he sought. Time passes unnoticed by the soul—an hour seems hardly a moment. Occasionally without its knowing how, the heart's experience escapes and vanishes, and can only be recovered by a return to profound recollection.

Sometimes proficients receive this grace with the power of thinking on certain subjects, but if their mind is distracted in the least, the favour disappears amid their thoughts, so that it is best to enjoy God's presence in secret and obscurity, for he loves solitude and hides himself in darkness. Therefore quiet your memory and understanding, admitting no thought whatever. Nor, when you feel that he is beginning to communicate himself to you, ought you to make loving aspirations, though they may seem right and delight you. Fix your mind on recollecting yourself more completely, for to constrain our heart is to embrace God, which is better effected solely by love. He often wishes us to be silent and leave him to work. But you will sometimes feel so tepid that you will need to seek every external and interior aid to kindle your devotion, and will fail even then. But when, solely by ceasing your efforts, you win this devotion, it is much the better way, for then God works and your humble desire does more than it appears to, for he receives it, and it appeals most to him who is your Salvation.

TWENTY-SECOND TREATISE

THAT WE SHOULD ATTEND SOLELY TO OURSELVES, SAYING: 'BE ZEALOUS AND VIGILANT AS REGARDS YOUR OWN PERSON AND UNITE YOURSELF WHOLLY TO GOD.'[1]

CHAPTER I

ZEAL IS GIVEN US FOR OURSELVES

THE key of knowledge consists in knowing for what things are made and in applying them to the right object: we call him the best doctor who uses suitable remedies for ailments. Spiritual discretion consists in putting the gifts of the Holy Ghost to their proper use. He generally gives the newly devout a strong desire and zeal for improvement that strengthens the soul to practise virtue, hate what opposes it, and strive with all its might to remove obstacles to its good resolution.

I think S. Bernard's words alluded to this: 'It is right that the fervour of holy desire should precede God's presence in the soul to which he intends to come, for it consumes and does away with the rust of the vices, making ready a place for the Lord.'

According to this, we may call this zeal the messenger of God, that like another S. John calls to us, in the desert of our soul, not to harden our heart (the way of the Lord) and to make straight the paths of our desires; to do penance and baptize ourselves in tears so that there may be manifested to us the kingdom of God that is hidden within us. This zeal for God renews the forces of the soul and gets rid of its earthly propensities, as God declared: 'With the fire of my jealousy shall all the earth be devoured. Because then I will restore to the people a chosen lip, that all may call on the name of the Lord, and may serve him with one shoulder.'[2]

Our Lord God here shows clearly that the fervent zeal he kindles in his servants is to destroy what is earthly in them, so

[1] Treatise xxii is the Letter Z, given in the Spanish as: *Zela y guarda tu persona, y mezclarás en todo á Dios.*

[2] Soph. iii, 8, 9.

that they may spiritually and perfectly praise and serve him with their whole heart, taking their service on the ' right shoulder ' of the soul, that is, the love on which he is enthroned as our Prince, although, as I said, he bestows this zeal in order that man may exercise it on himself.

Some people apply this gift to others instead of to themselves for whom it is granted. They elect themselves judges of other persons' affairs without reflecting that their own conscience is in such need of it that as the wise virgins said, there is not enough for both. If such persons imagine that they can watch over themselves and other people's lives with the like zeal, let them realize that what they give to the one will be wanting to the other. They will often be entirely lacking in zeal for themselves—an evil greatly to be feared which involves us in serious disorder. To avoid this, let us follow the advice of this Letter : ' To be zealous on our own account and unite ourselves wholly to God.'

The proud never doubt that they are zealous and vigilant on their own behalf, like the insolent Aman who wished for honour and respect on all sides. But they, desiring this from love of their own dignity, do not unite themselves wholly to God, but seek themselves in all things. This must be strictly avoided by him who serves God ; he should repeat after the prophet : ' The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up.'[1] Sometimes we are the dwelling-place of God, of ourselves, of the devil, and of the vices that exist in our heart. But we must not be zealous to guard it for aught but for God's dwelling-place, sorrowing more for having offended him than for the punishment due to us. If we are zealous regarding ourselves for any other reason, we err greatly by a wrong use of the divine gift and deserve the execution of God's threat : ' My jealousy shall depart from thee, and I will rejoice, and be angry no more.'[2] The Lord deprives us of the zeal that brought about better things when he sees that we seek them, not for his sake, but for our own.

God declares that he ' will be angry no more ' and will cease to strive against those who are zealous for their own fame and sanctity, as Josue was for that of Moses,[3] and the disciples for Christ's when they forbade that little children should be brought to him, thinking that it would be a want of respect. But our Lord blamed them, and opened his arms to the little ones, putting those

[1] Ps. lxviii, 10.

[2] The Spanish gives : ' I will rejoice ' (*holgare*) instead of ' I will cease,' as in the Douai version. Ezech. xvi, 42.

[3] Num. xi, 28.

to shame who esteemed themselves so highly that they would not be set on a level with those beneath them, but raised themselves to a higher rank in the heaven of sanctity, like another Lucifer. From such characters God, in a certain way, withdraws the care he took to punish their minor defects, for this is a serious fault deserving no light punishment. God says that he will rejoice, showing that it is harder or more difficult to him to correct us than to show us mercy, though we incite him more to punish us than to be merciful, and he bestows graces on us without any merit of ours. To be 'angry no more' means to let us follow our own will, which is the extreme of wrath, for if he does not show zeal in correcting our hearts, nothing outward can convert us. The wise man says: 'Consider the works of God, that no man can correct whom he hath despised.'[1] Do not disdain zeal in correcting your soul and directing it to better things, unless you wish the Lord to cease from chastising you jealously like a father who dearly loves you, for he is a jealous God.

The chief thing we recommend here to the recollected, as most necessary to them, is that they should show zeal for themselves alone, bearing in memory that brief but grand sentence of the wise man: 'Strive not in a matter that doth not concern thee.'[2]

Some people, under colour of a good intention, are so zealous concerning every insignificant thing that seems to them against God's will in others that they cannot endure it, but rush to remedy it as though their presence would put an end to all wrong-doing at once, and it was only waiting for them to bring their truncheon. They enquire into every defect as if their word

[1] Ecclus. vii, 14.

[2] Ecclus. xi, 9. On this subject S. Teresa says: 'A nun is very zealous about religious perfection; this is very right, but it may cause her to think every small fault she sees in her sisters a serious crime, and to watch constantly whether they do anything wrong, that she may run to the Prioress and accuse them of it. At the same time, maybe she never notices her own shortcomings because of her great zeal about other people's religious observance, while perhaps her sisters, not seeing her intention, but only knowing of the watch she keeps over them, do not take her behaviour in good part. The devil's chief aim here is to cool the charity and lessen the mutual affection of the nuns, which would injure them seriously. . . . Indiscreet zeal about others must not be indulged in; it .may do much harm; let each one look to herself' (*Castle*, M. i, ch ii). 'There is another temptation—persons are carried away by a zeal for virtue through the pain that the sight of the sins and failings of others occasions them. Satan tells them that this pain arises only out of their desire that God may not be offended, and out of their anxiety about his honour; so they immediately seek to remedy the evil. This so disturbs them that they cannot pray' (*Life*, ch. xiii, 14).

would stop it as holy water puts out fire. Gerson says of such people: 'Zeal for the house of God, especially in beginners, devours men of good will: that is, constrains them to get rid of or reprimand every scandal, or to persuade others strenuously to stop them. They say that these faults should not be overlooked or forgiven, nor must the scandal that might ensue be feared, but that those responsible should act manfully, 'with the armour of justice on the right hand and on the left, by honour and dishonour,'[1] and if necessary with stripes and bloodshedding and death.

Such people not only act in this way but blame and complain of those who live peacefully in order to attain more quietly to God, telling them that they have no zeal for virtue, but seek their own consolation. They say such conduct is not very safe, for the saints were enemies of the vicious who hated and killed them for opposing their wicked customs and transgressions. Finally the zealous quote against those who live in peace the words of S. Cyprian: 'It is rare to-day to meet with a Phineas who stabs the shameless; a Moses who kills idolaters; a Samuel who weeps over the disobedient; a Job who offers sacrifice for the negligence of his children; an Aaron who pronounces divine threats against Pharaoh; a Noe who prepares an ark for the voyagers. I weep as I say with the Apostle: superiors "who mind earthly things are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose god is their belly."[1] The times of danger have come in which those who delight rather in pleasure than in God, reject virtue under an appearance of piety. There are numberless superiors who will make no effort either to pray or fast.'

Such are the words of rash, interfering persons who rank themselves with the saints, forgetting that the latter were at first so zealous as regards themselves that they did not even mention other people's affairs. For as S. Bernard says: 'It is shameful that the woman who has stayed at home should blame those who come back from the war.'

I have seen so many souls lost through indiscreet zeal that I do not pass lightly over the counsel of this Letter to be zealous solely as regards ourselves, and even then not from fancy or presumption, like the pharisees who looked as decorous as gilt statues, and inwardly were full of pride. They helped no one except out of ostentation or for fear of being ill esteemed. By such means, you would not unite yourself to God in recollection but to a little leaven that would corrupt the whole lump of your actions.

[1] 2 Cor. vi, 7, 8.

If we realized into what evils those stumble who with blinded eyes show zeal for others, it would make us attend solely to our own salvation. It would do us no harm, for, as our Lord says, it would profit us more than to gain the whole world.

The least harm incurred by those who think they are zealous is detraction and judging others. Some are so deceived on this point that I believe they never make satisfaction for the harm their tongue has wrought, not to mention the disquiet and uneasiness caused to their conscience. The latter alone is very harmful, for it transfers all devotion from their heart to their feet and lips. Who knows how many holes they make in mending one, like the tinkers, and how, thinking to avoid a slight danger, they fall into a greater peril! They inflame the wound by trying to heal it before the time, and often cause one where there was no thought of such a thing. Their efforts to raise others higher destroy whatever good existed before. They often scandalize Christ's little ones, forgetting that he did not receive the pharisees well when they came to complain that they fasted but his apostles did not. Zealots imagine that they are showing service to God and charity to their neighbours by warning the latter to correct some slight fault and watching them in future, and fancy that it is their own correction that makes the others more careful and vigilant afterwards.

To teach these indiscreet zealots that it would be better to recollect themselves and leave other people alone after recommending them to God would require a long explanation on fraternal correction, showing the different way in which subjects and superiors should behave and the various kinds of zeal.

There are three reasons why we should confine our zeal to ourselves. It is wrong to speak ill of others; we are not bound to correct them; a religious who is not given a charge should leave things alone and dwell in peace.

CHAPTER II

AGAINST DETRACTORS

S. Gregory says that it is common for proficients to lament over the unprofitable state of the dissipated and their defection from the way of the perfect, and as the tongue is prone to speak of what fills and saddens the heart, they easily complain about other people's sins, saying nothing of their virtues. What gives warmth to these detractions and gilds them over so that they do

not sound wrong, is a small amount of zeal the devil mixes with them, like the fisherman, who hides the cruel hook in the soft body of a worm to catch the fishes that were safe and hidden in deep water.

Such people, to cover the vice of backbiting with a pretended zeal, say that they are not detracting, for they are not speaking against the person to whom they show antipathy but against his fault, which they detest. They even add, that they may not appear to have done so without necessity, that they mentioned it to prevent their hearers from falling into the like defect. As Gerson says, when talking of their neighbour's faults, they compare themselves favourably with him, like the pharisee and the publican, saying that they are not such as he, though God may have justified him because he confessed his guilt, while those who speak ill of him fall into the pit from which he has risen. As the Apostle says, they do the same things that they judge,[1] for they make the past sin present—not for the soul that has risen from it, but for themselves who now enter it. They open the pit that the other had closed by his repentance, which we ought to take for granted. If these fault-finders say that they are not censuring mortal sin, so much the worse, for they have the less reason for complaint. That does not stop them from cunningly exaggerating and condemning their neighbour's actions as though he were a bad man. The least they allege against him is that he has no love for virtue, penance, or prayer because he does not imitate their novel practices or take their advice, in which he commits no sin, for he is not in any way bound to do so.

Those who under cover of devotion detract others aver that they do so solely to prevent their hearers from associating with such a person to their own harm—as though he were a highwayman who would rob them of their virtues, or was so confirmed in vice as to be a source of corruption to others. To tell the truth, they would do better by removing with kind and spiritual talk any rancour or suspicion such as the devil arouses among God's servants by making them think ill of one another causelessly. He leads them to imagine that another person dislikes them, though perhaps he is helping them.

Some people excuse themselves by saying they make their neighbour's fault known in order that he may amend on finding it is made public, but men do not amend in such a case—they grow angry at seeing that others do not keep Christ's command

[1] Rom. ii, 1.

to correct secretly to prevent defamation. I would rather a religious should tell me of all my faults frankly in private than of one in a kind of message known to everybody.

Others offer a more colourable excuse by saying that they only speak of another's ill-doings to incite themselves and their hearers to pray for the poor unfortunate, who ought to get rid of his defect, but would not do so unless they helped him with their prayers. We shall find on examination that they are sinning, for when we ask others to pray for the amendment or repentance of a person we must not name him, as no good but much harm can come of it. Others form a bad opinion of him, and may destroy his good name by spreading the report, especially when the motive alleged is made known. Thus the prayer is changed into a very injurious accusation against one whom we ought rather to excuse, taking human weakness into account.

I can only say of this detraction born of zeal that, on deliberate consideration, I would rather see you break your vow of chastity than become a backbiter under such a pretext, for you would at once repent and be conscious of your guilt in the former case, but in the latter you would never amend or be aware of it. The name of zeal that you would give it would so blind you that 'seeing you would not see, and hearing you would not understand.'

By such means, your own virtue, if you have any, is obscured, though you think you increase it when you choose, in one way or another, to speak ill of your brethren. Though what you relate may be no sin in them, it is a sin in you, for you say it out of contempt for them. Your imagination makes you think there is danger for yourself where there is no danger for them. Though you may be free from corporal vices and consider yourself spiritual, believe me, you are guilty of great and subtle spiritual vices if you are in the habit of injuring the good name of others, and prick your ears like a startled horse in your eagerness to hear and believe ill of them. You ought rather to think ill of the detractor than of him he detracts, for we know he sins and are not sure the other does.

When David asked the Lord: 'Who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, or who shall rest in thy holy hill?' God answered: 'He that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath used no deceit in his tongue: nor hath done evil to his neighbour: nor taken up a reproach against his neighbours. In his sight, the malignant is brought to nothing.'[1]

As a rule he 'speaks truth in his heart' who has a good opinion

[1] Ps. xiv, 1–4.

of his neighbour. He has used 'no deceit in his tongue' as he has not spoken against or defamed him. He has not 'taken up a reproach against his neighbours' because he does not believe detractors, so that the malignant accuser is brought to nothing, for as the proverb says: 'A sad countenance drives away a backbiting tongue.'[1] This suffices to correct the malicious. They may be told that no man should judge another man's servant, for to his own master he lives or dies; or that it ill becomes the mouth that is eager to receive God and drink his Blood daily to swallow the blood of a neighbour. God commands us specially not to speak evil of the deaf,[2] for no good but great harm can result when our neighbour, being absent, cannot hear what is said about him. If he could, zealous as you are, you would not dare to utter it. Fear of man would bridle your tongue, though fear of God cannot.

Brother, do not let your zeal be like that of the pharisees, whose sanctity consisted in speaking ill of sinners, so that the most blessed S. John Baptist called them a generation of vipers. A viper stung the hand even of S. Paul, signifying that such zeal fills with venom the action even of a holy man as regards sinners. No other vice should be so feared by the spiritual as detraction, for no others so continually assault them as this, which is the more audacious in the case of the most perfect. Holy Scripture says: 'The stroke of the tongue' (that is, backbiting) 'will break the bones,'[3] meaning men strong in virtue, hidden in Christ, which is divine contemplation.

In conclusion, there are two things you must observe so that, not offending by your tongue, you may be a perfect man. The first is not to wound your neighbour secretly by speaking against him behind his back, otherwise you will be accursed of God, but like holy Job, let no detraction be found in your words. It is enough that you should tell of your own misdeeds in order to be absolved from them, and should not speak of those of others, so that if you are loosed from your own sins you may not bind yourself with your neighbour's.

The second point is that, as the sage says: 'Hast thou heard a word against thy neighbour? Let it die within thee.'[4] If you hear another ill spoken of, bury the speech in the depths of your being where it cannot harm you; let your charity hide the sins of others that God may hide yours. Praise whatever good you see in your brother and speak of it when you hear him blamed.

[1] Prov. xxv, 23.
[2] Lev. xix, 14.
[3] Ecclus. xxviii, 21.
[4] Ecclus. xix, 10.

Forget what was said so completely that it is news to you if it is repeated. Grieve within yourself because you are not justified even though you have not committed this particular fault; and you know not when you may deserve that God may leave you to fall into worse sins. Blessed will he be who reads this and tries his best to practise it. Amen.

I do not care to say how God hates this vice and, as Gerson says, how reluctantly he pardons it, for we can never make entire satisfaction for it or know how much we have injured another's character, or how our listeners will multiply the seed that we have sown. Of this you will have been the cause, who by revealing, falsely imputing, exaggerating, admitting, approving, or by any other means, began to defame your neighbour.

CHAPTER III

FRATERNAL CORRECTION

As for the second point, in these days almost everyone is weak enough to say 'touch me not,' we must seek for reasons why we should not correct anyone who does not provoke us into doing so, since we might say of all men: 'They have hated him that rebuketh in the gate: and have abhorred him that speaketh perfectly.'[1]

He who corrects is hated in the gate when, before he begins to speak, he is told to go away. They say of him: 'Look at him, with his hypocrisy! As if we were not quite as zealous as he is when need be! We have our teachers and superiors. We do not want him for our judge, who is hardly able to judge himself.'

No doubt fraternal correction has both its divine and even natural rights, for not only does our Lord command it in the Gospel, but right reason shows that we should advise and teach our neighbour when we see him err, showing him that love makes us wish for his improvement as much as for our own.

There are cases in which it is a virtue for a man not to content himself with fulfilling his obligations but to add to them, as, for instance, when he has vowed to wear common clothing and wishes to wear sackcloth, or when he denies himself fish on a fast day. At other times it is wrong to add to our obligations. If a person is bound to give himself twelve strokes with a discipline, if he give himself thirteen or more, clearly it would have been better

[1] Amos v, 10.

not to increase the number. So it would not be a virtue if a man added to the necessary fraternal correction that was obligatory. A gloss comments on the seventh chapter of S. Matthew : ' Very rarely, not without great necessity and regard to God, must we correct others, first taking from our own eyes the beam—that is, hatred.'

According to this, I think the recollected, in order to devote themselves more entirely to God, should, so far as is lawful, exempt themselves from giving fraternal correction. Gerson says : ' We should not give fraternal correction when it will probably also come from some other person, or when the offender would be the worse for it as he sins through malice or from confirmed custom, or when he will probably amend himself. For as Pedro, though he is rich, is not absolutely bound to feed a hungry man if there are genuine reasons for believing that he will be prevented either by himself or others from perishing of starvation, neither should anyone easily feel scrupulous as to his duty of giving fraternal correction, as though it were of obligation. It is on a par with many other actions that may be omitted without disobeying the divine commandments. Besides this, it would often be foolish and an act of interference to correct our brother as though he had committed a mortal sin. There might be many excuses for him such as weakness, or he might be so good and learned that we ought not to judge lightly that he would do wrong.' This sums up what Gerson says : according to him six reasons are required to make it obligatory for us to correct our brother.

The first reason is that we are certain he committed the sin, for he ought not to be reprimanded solely on suspicion.

The second : we must correct gently, for if we do so angrily it rather makes our brother angry than amends him and may even provoke him to do worse.

The third : there must be no one so well suited as myself to correct the delinquent, for if anyone as good, or better, or more familiar with him than myself, or his superior, goes to him, I may presume that he will probably reprove him, but if it is certain that he will not, I am bound to do so if the other five reasons concur.

The fourth condition is that there should be hopes that my rebuke would benefit the offender, otherwise it should not be given. The fifth is that the sin should be mortal, not merely venial. The sixth, that there should be no likelihood of a better time or place for the correction than when the sin is committed or when I choose for myself.

Unless these six conditions concur, we are not obliged to correct our neighbour in spite of Christ's command.

Gerson has clearly and briefly explained this obligation for all who are not superiors, so that they may concentrate their zeal and correction on themselves, as our Letter advises. Our neighbour might well be angry with us if we dared to rebuke him without these conditions. Though they are all difficult, the hardest seems to me to know whether a sin is mortal; if not we should place our finger on our lips lest we should destroy instead of building up.

CHAPTER IV

HOW WE SHOULD KEEP OURSELVES IN PEACE

REGARDING the third point, I do not mean to reprove zeal for virtue, but to show in what true zeal consists. I say it is the zeal with which each soul examines itself on all points, guarding self with vigilance, carefully practising all virtue and casting forth its vices with strong indignation. For, as S. Gregory says, if zeal for souls is a very acceptable offering to God, much more so will be zeal for our own soul. If we lose that, though we gain all the others for God, it will avail us nothing.

There is no doubt that you will benefit the souls of others in proportion as you benefit your own. Therefore, unless you are a superior or preacher, your zeal ought to consist in keeping tireless watch over your vices and virtues in order to rise to better things.

Beware, for I have seen many lost through misplaced zeal with such results that they had better have watched solely over themselves and not constituted themselves preachers before the time. Their zeal was an arrogant presumption seen in many persons in these days. They imagine that no one but themselves dares to speak the truth, and like Elias with zeal are zealous for the Lord God of hosts. But they might be told that there are seven thousand men in Israel whose knees have not been bowed except before God, and that all is not ruined as they imagine. For if God opened their eyes they would see that many whom they thought they had left behind are far advanced, and that if they wish to catch them up, they must cease from the false zeal the devil incites in them, as Gerson says, in order to disturb them and make them careless about their own recollection, whereby they will lose more than they gain. If they recognized that a care for others' perfection is reserved for great saints, and that

they are not ' double-major ' but very ' simple ' saints, they would look to themselves and leave the rest alone. A right zeal requires such wisdom that S. Bernard writes : ' Zeal without wisdom is not efficacious and does little good. It often causes great harm, for the more fervent the zeal, the more vehement the ardour, and the greater the charity, the more vigilance is requisite.

Gerson teaches that zealous people lacking in wisdom do the devil's work for him by making them everybody's foe. He continues : ' Alas for men who act conscientiously and are attacked by this pestilence. There is no worse or more deceitful enemy, for under the guise of a right intention and of great good, it disturbs souls, makes them fall, and leads them into all kinds of danger.'

Some may object that if all the danger incurred by zeal lies in a want of wisdom, it is safe to exercise it. If secular knowledge sufficed for zeal, there would be less peril, but divine wisdom, one of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, is required before anyone can safely exercise it. Therefore let no one assume this honour to himself, but be at peace and exercise his zeal on his own soul, which is committed to his care. If it is written that God gave every man commandment concerning his neighbour,[1] the meaning is, as the gloss declares, that he should associate with him and set him a good example ; this is the best way in the world to preach and includes fraternal correction.[2] Therefore you may safely decide to follow the advice of this Letter and watch over and guard for the love of God nobody but yourself, unless you are a superior. Even if you are a preacher, you should not devote your care to any special individuals, but should speak to the people in common about their sins and the virtues they should practise without having any other communication with your hearers, or trying by subterfuge to learn what is said about you.

If you are a confessor, think no more about your penitents except when they kneel before you, unless it be to pray for them. It is best not to take special notice of them, so that you may be like the rest of the religious. Confessors should meditate on Gerson's words to a hermit : ' So far as possible, study to preserve solitude of soul, free from all care of worldly things and

[1] Ecclus. xvii, 12.

[2] On zeal for serving God, S. Teresa advises her nuns : ' You can do much by prayer : and then do not try to help the whole world, but principally your companions. . . . Do you think it a trifling matter that your humility and mortification, your readiness to serve your sisters, your fervent charity for them and love for God should be a fire to enkindle their zeal, and that you should constantly incite them to practise the virtues ? ' (*Castle*, M. vii, ch. iv, 22.)

men, and keep your soul from superfluous anxieties under the guise of a desire for other people's salvation which would destroy all your efforts to be recollected. Drive such a thought from you at once as a dangerous highwayman, though it may be disguised under the cloak of a good intention. Look upon yourself as though you were in the world solely to save yourself and unless the care of souls is committed to you, say to your mind : 'The Judge and ruler of souls is our Lord God, who is good and powerful enough to save them without my help ; one duty is laid on me : to pray, weep, and know myself.'

He is fortunate who has charge of no one else, for he can the better watch over and guard himself, be at peace, and give himself more entirely to God. He need not complain, as did S. Gregory, of alien cares, for spiritual children are as troublesome as earthly ones, even if they are good ; but if they are bad, your rightful anxiety on their account will make them like scorpions. Then you will understand the risk run by superiors, and that in these days it is the sheep that corrupt their shepherds, turning against them and refusing to listen to a word of reproof without returning it sevenfold.

If anyone has reason to believe that if he visits another he will be slandered, I think he should omit the visit, for he is bound to regard his own honour first. But if the matter is serious, let him consider well all the drawbacks and not make three holes by mending one. The more zealous he is, the less should he trust himself, for more people sin under a good than a bad pretext. Let him pay no attention to what is neither a mortal sin nor an infringement of the essential religious vows.

A man who is zealous about his neighbour's faults is like a wild, hard-mouthed horse, who often jeopardizes his rider and harms himself as well as the one he meant to help.

I would rather my faults were made known by a traitor than by a zealot who was indiscreet, for the former could hardly conceal his treachery from everyone and would not easily be believed, but the other, being looked upon as a conscientious man, would be credited. The old men who accused Susanna were trusted on account of their age and office ; so would the zealot gain credence regarding the sinner, whom he ought to have corrected in private, as he would have wished done to himself.

To disturb good religious, the devil inspires them, under the cover of zeal, with a strong desire to reform their Order. Mistaking it for a thirst for justice, they yield to it, and brood over any superfluity or irregularity they may witness. They grieve

deeply over the harm done to the observance of poverty, and when with others who have the same zeal, they talk of nothing else. They speak as bitterly and sadly of the lack of exterior penance they notice as though it were a want of faith, or charity, without considering the bodily requirements of others or their detachment from the few extras they possess.

Such zeal is harmful and a great danger for the conscience, for the least sins that result are self-esteem and rash judgement, besides waste of time in talking matters over with people who cannot remedy them.

If you sincerely desire the reform of your Order, you must only make known its faults to those in authority. When you keep in mind actions of little importance that make you dislike others, believe me, it is a deceit of the devil who is plotting to make you hate your Order and your brethren, or to consider your own province much superior to another in which the little practices you blame are permitted. Such judgement is very dangerous, for true perfection consists not in casual, minor things, but in the spiritual and essential. On this the religious should centre all the strength of his heart, constantly watching for its default. He should remedy this as the chief requisition without neglecting the rest.

O brother, if you only knew by experience what is the supreme occupation of spiritual men ! Absorbed, detached, full of zeal, they dread their attention's being diverted from God alone, which makes them forgetful of all else. Calm and untroubled, by means of a single speech that seems carelessly uttered, they do more than you with all your zealous little efforts, for they only mention what is amiss to one who can remedy it and then speak solely of the essential point of the matter, believing that if this is set right, all the rest will follow.

It would be rash to condemn all zeal ; some is right, some is wrong, for there are two sides to every question. But if you wish to learn which is good, remember that zeal must commence with ourselves and must be silent : not that we must cease speaking, but we must speak by signs and those signs must be our actions. If you think the habits worn are too costly, always choose the cheapest ; if you consider that the tunics are over fine or large, take for yourself the roughest and smallest, and so with all else. Act so that your zeal promotes in yourself the observance you say that others should practise and after having kept it for some years, beg God to give your brethren strength to travel by the same road.

Oh, how many religious trouble themselves and their brothers by talking about the reformation of their Order, yet will not reform themselves. They are like soldiers who have been the first to retreat yet throw the whole blame for the disorder of the battle on the captain, though he was only one of the number.

CHAPTER V

GOD MUST BE BROUGHT INTO ALL THINGS

THE second part of this Letter bids us bring God into all things. We can do this by seeing in all creatures God who created them. They will not impede recollection if we contemplate them in their relation to the Divinity which fills all things, gives them being, and preserves them.

You will also bring God into all things if you give him a part in all you do, making him share in your honours, rejoice in your joys, and begging him to help you in your trials, since it is for this that he remains with us until the end of the world.

Not only should you take him for your companion, like the Hebrews in the desert, but you should bear in mind that he is the object of all your actions and desires, as the target to the arrow. Thus you will travel by him as the magi with the star and the mariners by the North Star, ever raising your heart to him.

You can also bring God into all things by attributing whatever happens to him as the principal Agent. For instance, if you are told that so-and-so has succeeded in the affair entrusted to him, answer: 'God helps those most who are in greatest need.' If someone is spoken of as being clever say: 'God our Lord often gives the mind the strength the body lacks.' If you hear that a sick person is better, reply: 'God provides for those who need it,' or on learning that a man has come into an unexpected fortune, remark that God has not forgotten him. If many deaths occur in a certain place, say that God scourges his sons. On hearing of a person's death, answer that God has recalled him from exile; if the kingdom is at peace, say that it is the Lord's work. When people's good qualities are mentioned, reply that even in these days he grants favours to men. If you have been evil spoken of, say that some day God will provide someone who will speak well of you. On hearing that a man wishes you ill, say that even his enmity may make God love you if you bear it patiently. To all the harm you hear of others, answer that if

God had not upheld you, it is impossible to say what you might not have done.

I do not think there is any event you could learn of that you might not refer to God in one way or another, for even if anyone said that Judas is in hell, you might answer that God chastises one man as a warning to the rest. I need not praise this practice, for if you derived no other benefits from it except to bring God into your speech, to keep him in memory, to refrain your tongue, to attribute all things to their proper source, and to edify your neighbour—were these its only benefits, it could not be praised enough, for it is the root of all good things.

Therefore, bring God into all things, receive everything from his hand except sin, and believe that all else comes to you with his special permission. This will help you to bear calmly either prosperity or adversity, since all comes from his hand, as the sage says.[1] Nothing so soothes the heart amid continual disaster as to repeat with Job : ' As it hath pleased the Lord, so is it done : blessed be the name of the Lord.'[2]

That which seems to happen to us through accident or ill-luck comes through the will of God who ordains all things with purpose, though we do not understand it because we do not know the end in view. It is enough for us to be sure that naught is done except by his wisdom and that from the evils to which he consents will come good that we little imagine.

Also, you will associate God with even evil things if you bear in mind that he consents to them in order to see whether you love him and prize him above the pleasures and sins that tempt you. These you should overcome by him, for in the zeal of his holy love you should keep yourself unstained by wickedness for him alone, to whom be praise for all eternity. Amen.

[1] Ecclus. x, 5. [2] Job i. 21.

FINAL TREATISE

SPEAKS OF THE PERSEVERANCE REQUIRED FOR RECOLLECTION, SAYING: 'FEAR TO RELINQUISH ONE TITTLE OF WHAT YOU HAVE BEGUN.'

CHRIST our Redeemer, Wisdom of the Father, who according to S. Paul is 'the end of the law,'[1] came to fulfil it, since he fulfilled all justice. Our Lord, who knows not change, affirmed on oath: 'Amen I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law till all be fulfilled.'[2]

Our Lord lays great stress on 'one tittle,' since he gives it greater unchangeableness than the heavens which David says endure by his ordinance and cause the day, and then the earth which is firmly established. Christ meant that it would be more easy to alter them than to leave unfulfilled one tittle of his Holy Scripture. The gloss explains his words as meaning that when the old earth and heavens are renewed, every tittle will be fulfilled. As applied to our subject, it teaches that we ought to strive daily to renew our heaven and earth—our soul and body—going from good to better by the virtue of perseverance that includes our 'tittle' of our Letter, and fearing to omit one jot of what we have begun.

Since, as you saw, our Lord cared for the tittle, as well as for the other Letters, you must care for the 'tittle' that I have put at the end of the Alphabet to show that perseverance is the aim of all perfection. As last words are the best remembered, let this tittle written by the soft pen of our Lord's tongue be inscribed on the volume of your heart: 'Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.'[3]

Our Lord warns us under a threat to persevere, never losing

[1] Rom. x, 4. [2] S. Matt. v, 18. [3] Apoc. iii, 11.

our hold, that is our practice, of this holy exercise or another will take the crown that would have been ours. Let us persevere that we may not have to tell our Lord that our strength did not suffice. He tells us also that he will come quickly to give us help and power to persevere, as Isaias says : ' It is he that giveth strength to the weary, and increaseth force and might to them that are not. Youths shall faint, and labour, and young men shall fall by infirmity. But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.'[1] It is Christ who gives strength to the weary that they may persevere anew. We must ask force from him who like a giant rejoiced to run on his way unweariedly ; he remained firmly fixed upon the cross ; and the Holy Ghost rests on him to all eternity, though not for long on us, because we have no constancy. Yet if we ask Christ for it, he who gives strength to the weary will bestow it on us as he did on the Apostles and all the rest who persevered in prayer, for only such deserve to receive the fulness of grace and to be clothed with heavenly virtues.

By saying that God increases the strength of the weak, Isaias shows that he gives it promptly to the humble who realize that they require it. He casts down the proud from the throne of perseverance and raises to it the humble, who always think that they have fallen away and strive to rise to better things.

The youths and young men with little wisdom are sinners who fall from one vice into another : those who go from strength to strength are souls that go on and mount up. The former faint and fall because every sin is a fall and a fainting away from better things. Though the sinner is sometimes too blinded by passion to realize it at the time, later on, his heart is greatly troubled by it.

They that trust in the Lord that in his name they will act rightly, renew their strength, devoting themselves as eagerly to spiritual matters as they did to worldly business. They renew their strength, because if they often draw near to God, it seems rather a divine than human act, so that they dare to say they can do all things in God who strengthens them. The prophet declares that the Lord made him more valiant than his enemies, for he who perseveres is as hard as a diamond and no blows can affect him.

Again, those that hope in the Lord renew their strength because

[1] Isa. xl, 29–31.

they change continually from good to better, saying in their heart with Job: 'As a palm tree (I) shall multiply my days.'[1] 'My root is opened beside the waters, and dew shall continue in my harvest. My glory shall always be renewed, and my bow in my hand shall be repaired.'[2]

He multiplies his days as a palm tree who perseveres in the good he has begun. He may well compare himself to a palm, which is always green, for he never forsakes his good resolve, saying: 'As long as breath remaineth in me, and the Spirit of God in my nostrils, my lips shall not speak iniquity, neither shall my tongue contrive lying.'[3]

No tree so desires a companion as the palm, for it will not bear fruit without, nor does any virtue so require other virtues as does constancy, for in itself it has no value unless founded on what is good; it loses its title if built on evil, and is called stubbornness and obstinacy. Only he who perseveres in any virtue deserves the name of a constant soul; hence the sage says he is like a palm exalted in Cades (sanctity), for in sanctity alone should man persevere, as in all else he does not persevere but falls away day by day. Hence Job says: 'The just man shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger,'[4] as he becomes by continuing in the way of justice that alone requires perseverance.

The palm is said to live longer than any other tree, and virtue ought to stay with man to the end, in order that he may be saved. Other virtues are of little worth unless kept so far as possible by perseverance, so that the soul may receive the essential part of blessedness called by theologians 'tension,' which is an eternal certitude of seeing God clearly and loving him. This is a part of perseverance that never turns back from good begun, but stretches forth its hand to things of greater fortitude, bracing its arm to receive the palm of victory which is only given to those who ascend the palm tree of perseverance. They say by their deeds, with the Canticles: 'I will go up into the palm tree, and will take hold of the fruit thereof.'[5]

We are daring enough in taking hold of what we know will benefit us, and there is no virtue that has so much right and power to gain us a reward as perseverance. Therefore let him who is to pluck its fruits exclaim triumphantly with the persevering Apostle: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,

[1] Job xxix, 18. [2] Job xxix, 18–20. [3] Job xxvii, 3, 4.
[4] Job xvii, 9. [5] Cant. vii.

I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord the just judge will render to me in that day: and not only to me, but to them also that love his coming.'[1]

All Christians await our Lord's coming, but only the persevering love it, because they know that blessed are those who look for his coming, that is, who continue in the good life they have begun. All other trees seem weary of growing because in the end they become leafless and shrunken, but the palm raises its branches aloft like an image of eternity, for the longer it lives the more strong and upright it is. This teaches us not to diminish in the virtue we have begun to practise as the tepid do, like old trees that decay as each day a branch withers, resembling the relaxed, whose virtue lessens and diminishes daily. The Apostle prays that our 'whole spirit, and soul, and body, may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'[2]

He preserves his *spirit* who perseveres in the contemplation he began; his *soul* if he does not omit the practices of the active life that he can perform; and his *body* in virtue if he perseveres in suitable penances. But contemplation is the one of these three things that can be preserved in greatest entirety and increased daily by perseverance.[3] Of this the wise man says: 'The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forth and increaseth even to perfect day.'[4]

At first contemplation is like a narrow path, but it widens with perseverance until the soul, as the bride of our Lord, desires to see him at midday—that is, the glorious and perfect love in

[1] 2 Tim. iv, 7, 8. [2] 1 Eph. v, 23.

[3] 'I write this . . . that men may understand how great is the good that God works in a soul when he gives it a disposition to pray in earnest, though it may not be so well prepared as it ought to be. If that soul perseveres in spite of sins, temptations, and relapses brought about in a thousand ways by Satan, our Lord will bring it at last—I am certain of it—to the harbour of salvation. . . .

'Let him never cease from prayer who has once begun it, be his life ever so wicked; for prayer is the way to amend it, and without prayer such amendment will be much more difficult. Let him not be tempted by Satan, as I was, to give it up on pretence of humility. Our Lord shows great mercy to him to whom he gives the grace and resolution to strive for this blessing (prayer) with all his might, for God withholds himself from no one who perseveres. He will by little and little strengthen that soul so that it may come forth victorious. I say resolution, because of the multitude of obstacles that Satan puts before it at first to prevent it from travelling on this road, for he knows the harm it will do to him—he will lose not only that soul, but many others also' (*Life*, ch. viii).

[4] Prov. iv, 18.

which God reposes. The height of the palm makes it specially difficult to gather its fruit. It is not easy to persevere and to drive away the devils whose work it is to impair our good actions, but if they see that we keep firm, they flee. Hence no better weapon can be found for overcoming them than perseverance, and nothing is more dangerous than to give it up. It is of this that the sage declares: 'Unless thou hold thyself diligently in the fear of the Lord, thy house shall quickly be overthrown.'[1] He holds himself in the fear of the Lord who dreads giving up what he has begun.

Recollection cannot be perfected in this life, but it can be commenced, and holy fear of God is the strongest motive for perseverance in it. As the sage says: 'He that feareth God will turn to his own heart.'[2]

The recollected fear to go out of themselves and give up recollection because they know by experience that it shields them from all ill, and that they would be forsaking God in proportion as they relinquished it, for our Lord is truly found in it. That which God prizes most under heaven is to receive the soul that recollects itself in him alone, as the soul knows well, for he has taught it. Hence, if it is prudent, it should fear nothing so much as withdrawing from that which so highly pleases our Lord whom we ought all to please to the utmost.[3]

If our root, which is our heart, is like that of Job, planted near the waters—the graces that God secretly infuses—we may well persevere. But if this is lacking, there will be wanting the dew of tears upon the dryness of our recollection whereby we are able to cut off wandering thoughts from our mind, in order that, by perseverance, our light, the testimony of our conscience, may be renewed day by day, by which is rebuilt the ark of our Exercise.

Without this consolation, which must be sent from the highest heaven lest our heart should suffer from fancies and imaginations, few persons can persevere for half an hour. But if it should be wanting, you must not be wanting in perseverance, for you must believe that our Lord treats you in this manner to see whether you will fail or fall or be solicitous, for in such a case he highly commends solitude.

[1] Ecclus. xxvii, 4. [2] *Ibid.* xxi, 7.

[3] The soul may place itself in the presence of Christ, and accustom itself to many acts of love directed to his sacred Humanity, and remain in his presence continually, and speak to him, pray to him in its necessities and complain to him in its troubles; be glad with him in its joys, and yet not forget him in its joys. All this it may do without set prayers' (*Life*, ch. xii, 3).

He who receives what he prays for at once, with little importunity, receives but one favour ; but he whose prayer is granted after delay receives two ; one brings him what he asks, the other fulfils our Lord's counsel to persevere which he constantly recommends in the Gospel. He who perseveres obeys the command : 'Ask and you shall receive,' for perseverance alone is a great gift of God, who makes us desire and persevere. The more you do so, the better you serve him and the greater reward you deserve. As it is more glorious to deserve a gift than to receive it undeservedly, by adding perseverance you add glory, and will love what you are to receive better, for we love best what costs us most trouble.

Therefore do not cease to recollect yourself, though you may be wanting in devotion, nor let that stop your perseverance, lest you be like him of whom Gerson speaks : 'He who feels no devotion and therefore will not contemplate spiritual things is like a man who feels cold and will not approach the fire until he is warm, or who is dying of hunger but will not seek for food until he feels satisfied. For what is the object of betaking oneself to prayer or meditation except to kindle in one's soul the flame of divine love, or to satisfy one's cravings for divine gifts and graces ?

Those are mistaken who think time spent in prayer is lost if they do not receive the dew of devotion at once. I say to such people that if they do their best and keep up a steady war of resistance against their wandering thoughts and their despondency at failing to get rid of them or obtaining peace, they gain greater merit very often than if they felt devotion at once without any struggle, because they are serving God at their own expense at the cost of more effort and suffering. However, anyone who wishes to undertake this exercise ought to spend much time on it, to set aside all care about his own or other people's business, and force himself to remain for a long while in one place, whether he receives consolations or not.

Yet in order to obtain them, he must continue his efforts ; when he feels very wearied, let him say to himself that he will wait for half an hour more, and having done his penance, will expect the alms of divine grace ; when an hour has passed, let him persuade himself to remain an hour longer, and during the second part of the half-hour, his contemplation will often prosper better than during all the past time. But if he fails to gain what he asked for, let him know that he is unworthy of it and offer the hardness of his heart as sacrifice. By this means he may conquer

God, who when his time has come, may bestow the longed-for grace.[1]

Gerson here shows what perseverance is required for recollection. If you are careless and give way to human distractions for a single day, you lose almost all that you have gained in the past, and next day you will find that you must begin anew, like the Nazarites who were set apart to be consecrated to God, and had to recommence their consecration if they had been present at the death of anyone, the former time not being counted.

Therefore, lest you should forfeit your labour in the past you must persevere like the sacred creatures of Ezechiel that turned not when they went, but everyone went straight forward in the impetus and force of the spirit. Unfortunately, in these days, some Nazarites go back farther in one day than they advance in three. Of such Jeremias says 'they were whiter than snow, purer than milk, and their face is now made blacker than coal, and they were not known in the streets.'[2]

You will feel ashamed at thinking that the palm, though planted in dry soil, never loses its verdure either from the burning sun or bitter cold, yet you, on some slight occasion, give up and fail. A trifling difficulty, a slight temptation, a little trouble, overthrows you. Yet a dog remains to chase its prey among the thorns, and if it cannot capture it, stays there barking until someone comes to help, so that it can finish the task it began well.

Sailors keep to their work amid great dangers, and travellers run the risk of footpads; the cavalry advance fearlessly among the enemy without giving way or dying, yet you will not persevere because you prefer indulging your senses. You are like a worm-eaten apple that soon falls from the tree. You must be shallow-hearted, since you relinquish the exercise before you have reached the longed-for end in which you will be satisfied by it. You may look on yourself as a wandering, changeful star among the servants of God, who resemble stars that remain in their order to fight for us against him who lies in ambush to overthrow us, so that, dejected and wounded, we may desist, or at least, like Lot's wife,

[1] 'Very often, for many years, I was more occupied with the wish to see the end of the time I had appointed for myself to spend in prayer, and in watching the hour-glass, than with other thoughts that were good. If a sharp penance had been laid upon me, I know of none that I would not very often have willingly undertaken, rather than prepare myself in prayer by self-recollection. . . . In the end, our Lord came to my help; and then, when I had done this violence to myself, I found greater peace and joy than I sometimes felt when I had a desire to pray' (*Life*, ch. viii).

[2] Lam. iv, 7, 8.

may look back with lingering thoughts of the past. If you know that you are as changeful as the moon, wanting one thing to-day and another to-morrow, it will help you greatly to go to Christ, who always sought the one thing, and beg him to have mercy on you and make you resemble the just man who remains in contemplation like a sun that never changes whatever clouds may pass across it.

You should fear greatly when you decide to turn back, lest there may be some unchecked sin in you, or love of self, or something alien to God, for your determination of withdrawing from prayer to perform some petty works of the active life, which compared with those of S. Martha are but off-scourings, is no slight calamity for you.[1] Hence, when you resolve to give up recollection, you should begin to do penance for any sin of which you may be guilty, according to Job's words : ' If thou wilt put away from thee the iniquity that is in thy hand, and let not injustice remain in thy tabernacle : then mayest thou lift up thy face without spot, and thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear, and being buried thou shalt sleep secure.'[2] Not without great disgrace to you and delight to themselves, will the devils say of you, if you do not persevere : ' This man began to build a house and could not finish, nor did he follow the example of him who said : " It is finished." '

We may say that the *Gloria* is sung at the end, for only he who perseveres until then will be saved. The labourers in the vineyard were not called to receive their pay till the evening, and our Lord used to visit his own at nightfall after the Resurrection, to show that he never deserts those who persevere. So S. Mary Magdalen, because she stayed after the rest, was the first to find him.

S. John tells us that Christ loved his own unto the end to show

[1] Speaking of prayer S. Teresa says : ' By the blood which our Lord shed for us, I implore those who have not yet begun to enter into themselves to stop this warfare : I beg those already started on the right path not to let the combat turn them back from it. Let them reflect that a relapse is worse than a fall, and see what ruin it would bring. They should confide in God's mercy, trusting nothing in themselves ; then they will see how his Majesty will lead them from one mansion to another, and will set them in a place where these wild beasts can no more touch or annoy them. . . . You may think that as it is so dangerous to desist, it would have been better never to have begun, and to have remained outside the castle. But as I began by saying, and as God himself declares : " He that loves danger shall perish by it," and the door by which we must enter is prayer ' (*Castle*, M. i, ch. i).

[2] Job xi, 14, 15, 18.

us that our love will avail little unless it perseveres, for the wise man says : ' He that is a friend loveth at all times.'[1] This is so requisite that he who does not love unto death will be counted as an enemy.

God may well bid you persevere in his service, for he will never cease bestowing fresh graces and showering his gifts on you daily, though you do not see them. You have as your security the merits of his Passion, and the first principle of your baptism remains. On the table of the altar is ever prepared for your soul the Bread of Angels, and the glory promised for you will have no end or satiety, though according to the rigour of God's justice, one hour of it would suffice to repay all your merits.

This being so, we should, as Isaias says, take wings like the eagle, which makes a longer flight than any other bird. Let us not long for the eagle's piercing sight, the sublime speculations that scrutinize the Sun of Justice, but prefer the wings endowed with renewed strength, the invigorated affections by which to fly to God alone and embrace and hold him fast. Thus we can run on without fatigue, passing on swiftly by the contemplation of creatures, without any distraction to hinder or offer obstacles to us.

Isaias says that the just change their strength from good to better, not from good to worse like the statue of which Daniel speaks which deteriorated steadily from the beginning or head, but like the water passed over by the prophet, which rose higher as its volume increased. Such souls progress either by flying or running and do not fail, for perfect men are not impeded by the active life they live on earth, though their conversation is in heaven in the contemplative life. Blessed will you be if you persevere in the exercise you have chosen and follow your vocation, not wandering to and fro and changing your mind. If you fluctuate too much you will be like a plant that does not thrive because it is often transplanted. Do not be negligent or renounce what you have begun ; then you will abide in your calling as the Apostle advises, not passing from house to house, but remaining in one, as our Lord bade his disciples. But remember that you must so run as to gain the prize, for only he who perseveres enjoys the results of his journey. And let the unction that you received in the beginning abide in you, as S. John counsels,[2] for if you are patient in good works, you will receive the crown of life and behold the goodness of God. Do not resemble the little altar of Jupiter (the devil), called a tripod because it had three feet, on

[1] Prov. xvii, 17. [2] 1 John ii, 27.

which were sacrificed the wicked and inconstant who gave up any good work they had begun at every trivial difficulty. The city of God is built four-square, to denote its peace and permanency. Let not your garment be cut too short to cover your feet, for it would be a disgrace that the robe of perseverance should not clothe the end of your life. Feel no alarm at the difficulties that beset beginners, for perseverance will overcome and smooth them all if with your whole heart you commence and persist every day in seeking the delicious wisdom that is learnt in the school of recollection. Later on, you will hardly be able to desist from it, but will find yourself marvellously imprisoned in the dungeon of love, from which you will never wish to be set free,[1] as the sage declares of wisdom : ' Come to her with all thy mind, and keep her ways in all thy power. Search for her, and she shall be made known to thee, and when thou hast gotten her, let her not go : for in the latter end thou shalt find rest in her, and she shall be turned to thy joy. Then shall her fetters be a strong defence for thee, and a firm foundation, and her chain a robe of glory : for in her is the beauty of life, and her bands are a healthful binding.'[2] We shall not be shut in the blessed prison of spiritual wisdom unless we first capture and enclose her in the jail of perseverance, which she will not want to leave, for she detests nothing more than a changeful, irresolute man. He who keeps firm and constant, though he may have natural impediments, will obtain all he seeks if he continues what he began.

Blessed art thou, O glorious perseverance, consecrated in him who rejoiced as a giant to run his course until his work was finished ! Thou art the protector of the virtues, the helpful staff of those who pass through the valley of this world ; thou alone dost bring us to the haven where we would be ; dost make the bitter sweet, dost disperse all troubles, and lighten the heavy burdens. Thou dost strengthen the weak, and without thee the strong become infamous. As S. Bernard says, none but thou dost enable the valiant to obtain eternal happiness and cause the virtues to be crowned. Without thee, the warrior does not obtain the victory nor does the conqueror win the palm. Thou art the energy of the strong, the perfection of the virtues. Thou art the joy of

[1] ' Happy the souls, imprisoned by the fetters and chains of God's gifts and mercies and too strongly bound and helpless to free themselves. " Love is strong as death and hard as hell." Oh, that we were but slain by this love and plunged in this divine hell, from whence, ah, from whence there is no hope of escape, or rather no fear of being cast forth ! ' *Concep.* xvi, 7, 8).

[2] Ecclus. vi, 27–31.

merit, the intercessor that asks for the reward, the sister of patience, the friend of peace, the bond of friendship, the tie of unity, defender of sanctity, glory of strength, and dost conquer the invincible, making him victor who has no claim to victory.

If you wish, brother, to obtain this virtue, you must renew your intention every day, bringing to mind your resolution never to fail in this exercise. Remember that your Lord watches you ceaselessly, therefore, either from fear or shame or that you may please him, never leave off prayer. Recall to mind passages of Holy Scripture relating to perseverance, chiefly our Lord's words : 'Pray without ceasing.' Think how he often prayed the whole night apart from his disciples to teach us the benefit of solitude for the soul that sits in loneliness and rises above itself. Consider your vows and your obligation to become better, seeing the graces you have received, and that he who has continual warfare before him must fight perseveringly. One who is ever receiving favours must never cease giving thanks for them, nor must he who is loved with constancy fail to love ; yet, though he loves faithfully, he cannot make a due return to him who loves without cessation. Remember that the longer you persevere, the nearer you approach the end, and that your perfection does not surpass your perseverance ; therefore, realizing that all your good consists in this, you should the more strenuously strive to obtain it.

If you cannot persevere for love's sake, force yourself with holy zeal to enter by this narrow door of recollection, for God gives grace to enable him who has the courage to keep constant. I advise you to put aside completely all that impedes you, so that you may persevere the more calmly. Be as careful of your prayer as of your sleep. If, in order to sleep you stop all noise and occupation, and shut yourself up alone, forgetting all the affairs of this world, you must do the same before you pray, turning your mind wholly to spiritual matters. Remember that God created you for nothing but to pray, and asks of you naught else but to pray to him in spirit and in truth, for this will quicken in you the effort to fulfil your vocation and perfect yourself in it. Urge yourself on continually, make glad your heart, attract it by spiritual delights to pray to God unceasingly, for the waggon lasts longer if it is oiled. Think of the reward and glory of those who persevere, so that you may love this virtue. Remember, it is in your power to desist from what you have begun and perhaps you would not return to it : the untamed bird that escapes from the cage loses in a day all the tameness it had learnt, but if you had persevered for some time in teaching it, on being set free it would

not have flown away. This will be so with your heart as regards recollection if you devote yourself to it constantly at first. Recollection will often recall you to yourself if you are solicitous and persevering with it now. For love once kindled never rests nor ceases to spur on and incite the heart until it is united immediately with him it loves wholly—with God—to whom be honour and glory eternally throughout the ages. Amen.

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